

Hafa Adai!

MVA: Visitor arrivals up 255% in February 2023. **PAGE 3**

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\$1

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'Payment to secure 25% pension benefit this fiscal year will go on'

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Palacios-Apatang administration is committed to provide funding to pay the additional 25% pen-



Norita

» **\$58M FEMA reimbursement eyed to secure funding for retirees' 25% benefits**

sion benefits to government retirees this fiscal year 2023, according to acting Finance secretary Tracy B. Norita.

"I know that it will take a lot of collaboration between the administration and the Legislature to ensure that that commitment

is fulfilled," said Norita in response to questions during her confirmation hearing Thursday. **See PAYMENT on Page 4**

Tanapag cemetery nearly full

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Environmental Health Disease and Prevention office of the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. will no longer be able to



Muña

accommodate new burial plot permits requests for the Tanapag Public Cemetery by mid-year of 2023 due to

See TANAPAG on Page 4



VEHICLE FIRE

A fire personnel of the Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services suppresses a vehicle fire in Chalan Laulau last Sunday. **Story on Page 4**
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

PALACIOS TO PRESIDENT BIDEN 'Respect Pacific island communities'



Biden



Palacios

CNMI Gov. Arnold I. Palacios opened the 194th meeting of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council on Monday at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan, expressing his views on President Joe Biden's direction to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration secretary of commerce to consider designating a national marine

sanctuary in the Pacific Remote Island Areas.

"It really is about communications, respect for each other, respect for what we represent, and respect for federal and regulatory agencies," said Palacios. "Government policies have profound impacts on small communities. I am not opposed to conservation and management measures—that

See RESPECT on Page 4

Rios confirmation hearing postponed



Rios

» **Overwhelming support for Yumul appointment**

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The confirmation hearing for acting Department of

Commerce secretary Joseph Santos Rios Jr. did not push through yesterday, even as acting Department of Public **See RIOS on Page 4**

'TOUCHBACK' COUNTDOWN
Days until
'touchback rule' takes effect on
Sept. 30, 2023:
185

INSIDE



BUSINESS

Dave Burger would like the CNMI to attract more digital nomads to come to the islands.

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NATION

A former student kills three children and three adults at an elementary school in Nashville.

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ASIA

North Korea's Kim Jong Un wants to increase production of weapons-grade material to make bombs.

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Local

OVR works to include clients in CNMI employer work plans

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Representatives of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation meet with the CNMI Department of Labor last March 28, 2023, to discuss work opportunities for people with disabilities. From left, OVR counselor Rose Ichiuo, OVR case services manager Arlene Yamagata, OVR director Jim Rayphand, DOL Job Placement officer Manny Iguel, OVR counseling clerk Annie Marciano, and OVR counselor aide Sherraine Flores.

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Representatives of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation met with Department of Labor's Job Placement officer Manny Iguel last March 28, 2023, to discuss opportunities for people with disabilities to be included in employer workplans for hiring more U.S. citizen workers.

Iguel asked for the meeting and explained that he would be asking employers to include OVR as a resource for finding potential employees in working toward meeting the requirement for no less than 30% U.S. citizen workforce for any given company.

Among other things, he wanted to be sure that OVR would be amenable to meeting with employers and working with them to make suitable placements. He believes some employers are still hesitant to hire people with disabilities due to uncertainties about how their disabilities might affect work performance, but added, "It doesn't change the fact that they still need to show good faith effort to meet the 30% minimum hires of U.S. citizens. I'll be telling them to come knock on OVR's doors whenever they have openings." He hopes "OVR can assist in helping them to understand how our people with disabilities can be successful employees."

OVR case services manager Arlene Yamagata explained that OVR has in theory expanded its customer base to include employers. "Without our employers, there would be no jobs for us to place our primary consumers of people with disabilities into. We need to work with employers as well to educate and assist them in the process of job placement for our clients, if we want to them succeed," she said.

OVR receives federal grant funds to provide vocational rehabilitation services to assist eligible individuals with disabilities to prepare for, secure, retain, advance in, or regain competitive integrated employment within their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabili-

ties, interests, and informed choice. Services include, but are not limited to, assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs, vocational rehabilitation counseling and guidance, information and referral, physical and mental diagnosis and restoration services, vocational and other training services, job search/placement assistance/job retention services, supported employment services, post-employment services, rehabilitation/assistive technology, school-to-work transition services, etc. Services are individualized and provided in the context of an approved Individualized Plan for Employment. OVR consumers may be required to financially participate in their rehabilitation program.

Yamagata will serve as point of contact for employers wishing to explore options for hiring individuals with disabilities through OVR. "From experience, we've seen job announcements published where employers have no intention of actually hiring anyone other than to renew their current staff. For the sake of time, we hope to identify those employers who are serious about hiring and not just going through the motions to satisfy a logistical requirement," she said.

OVR director Jim Rayphand said that OVR will do everything within its capacity to assist employers and employees forge successful working relationships. "Ultimately, we will do everything possible and, of course, allowable to make sure that our clients are qualified to do the jobs they want to do. It should be said as well that the consumers themselves have to buy into the process and commit themselves to achieving their respective employment goals. By definition, employment means work and employers want people who will do the work they need for their companies, so our clients need to put in work, if they want to work." (PR)

MVA: Visitor arrivals up 255% in February 2023

Visitor arrivals to the islands of Saipan, Tinian and Rota grew 255% to 14,863 visitors in February 2023, compared to 4,188 visitors received in February 2022, according to the Marianas Visitors Authority.

Overall, visitor arrivals to the Marianas are 55% lower year-to-date compared to fiscal year 2019 before the pandemic.

Visitors arrivals from South Korea for the month were the highest since before the pan-

demic, reaching 12,025 arrivals compared to 2,821 in February last year. Jeju Air operated 28 flights during the month compared to seven flights last February, while T'Way operated 35 flights compared to eight flights a year ago. Meanwhile, Asiana Airlines has announced that, although they suspended flights to Saipan on March 4, they will resume four flights a

week beginning April 27, becoming daily in July through Aug. 23. Overall, by the end of fiscal year 2023 the number of available air seats from Korea is projected to be restored to 77% of the number available before the pandemic.

The Marianas received 605 visitors from Japan in February 2023 compared to 57 visitors in February 2022. Travel packages to the Marianas are

still expensive compared to Asian destinations due to the strength of the U.S. dollar. The Japan government has also just indefinitely extended its national travel discount program that offers up to 20% discount to encourage domestic—rather than outbound—travel, making recovery of the market a continued uphill battle for the Marianas.

On a positive note, in May the Japanese government is expected to downgrade the coronavirus from a Category 2 infectious disease to Category 5, the same level as the seasonal flu.

The MVA will host its annual Marianas Seminar & Webinar on April 5 in Tokyo to meet personally with travel agents and media and promote the destination.

China, which rivalled South Korea as a top source market of the Marianas prior to the pandemic, marked only 73 visitors. Strict quarantine requirements in February along with geopolitical concerns have kept the market *de facto* closed for leisure travel to the Marianas.

The Marianas also received 808 visitors from Guam, 611 visitors from the U.S., and a combined 741 visitors from all other destinations in February. (MVA)

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Free Easter Egg hunt

Delia's CUP, or Delia's Community Uplifting Program, a nonprofit organization created by Delia Maratita Camacho, spouse of Saipan Mayor Ramon "RB" Jose Blas Camacho, will be hosting a free community Easter Egg Hunt on April 1, 2023, Saturday, at 9:30am, at the Minachom At-dao Pavilion.

The egg hunt will have three age divisions: for 1-3 years old, for 4-7 years old, and for 8-12 years old. Prizes will be given to those who collect the golden egg, the silver egg, the most number of eggs, and the most creative basket. (PR)

4.8-magnitude quake in Guam region

At 10:11pm on March 27, 2023, a report of a 4.8-magnitude earthquake occurred at 13.089°N 143.928°E in the Guam region. Currently, there are no tsunami warnings or advisories issued by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center. For more information, please contact the CNMI EOC State Warning Point at (670) 237-8000. (PR)

Water service interruption in San Vicente Tank Service Area

There will be a scheduled water service interruption in the San Vicente Tank Service Area Saturday, April 1, 2023, from 8:30am to 4:30pm

■ **Area(s) affected:** south of San Vicente, Upper Dandan Homestead, Naftan and Obyan.

■ **Purpose:** The scheduled water outage is due to the isolation of a mainline leak located on the Dandan Baseball Field

■ **Roadway(s) affected:** CUC operators will be working on the shoulder of the southbound lane on Dandan Road. For the safety of our crew, motorists are advised to cautiously slow down while driving in the area.

For more information, contact the CUC hHotline at (670) 236-4333 or monitor our Facebook page for the latest updates (<https://www.facebook.com/CommonwealthUtilitiesCorporation/>). (PR)

'CPA transition report fraught with factual inaccuracies'

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Ports Authority management team has thoroughly reviewed the 17-page transition report prepared by the CPA transition team for the Palacios-Apatang administration and determined that it is full of factual inaccuracies.

During a special CPA board meeting yesterday to discuss the long-awaited CPA transition report, CPA executive director Christopher Tenorio said that, upon review, he and his team found that the report is riddled with factual inaccuracies and that, if its recommendations are carried out, it could potentially prevent CPA from effectively running the CNMI's ports.

"The purpose of the 2022 CPA Transition Report was to provide an accurate reflection of the current state of CPA's operations in order to help facilitate the transition between the Torres and Palacios administrations. However, I have discovered that the report is fraught with factual inaccuracies and this has led

to recommendations that—if implemented—will hinder CPA's ability to efficiently and effectively manage and operate the ports," he said.

Aside from the inaccuracies, Tenorio alleged that some transition team members assigned to investigate CPA had a conflict of interest, with transition members recommending one of their own to sit on the board.

"Even more concerning is the fact that some transition team members have a conflict of interest in drafting this report. For example, the report recommends that at least one current CPA board member be replaced with a member from the transition team. Logically, the administration is more likely to replace CPA board members if the 2022 transition report casts a negative light on CPA's operations. This incentivizes transition team members to make baseless negative findings and recommendations," Tenorio said.

The executive director also explained to the board that there are numerous unsupported statements made in the transition report that in-

fluenced the transition team's recommendations.

"Basing recommendations on unsupported facts is dangerous and will lead to policies that will hinder CPA's ability to carry out its mission. The transition report misinforms the administration of the state of CPA and its operations, and as such the recommendations therein should carry little weight," Tenorio said.

He acknowledges that there are existing issues of concern, but the inaccuracies overshadow the valid points made by the transition team.

"This is not to say that the transition report is entirely bereft of valid points. CPA acknowledges that there are existing issues of concern, like its fiscal outlook, that must be ad-

ressed. CPA has taken steps to address and resolve these challenges and it was hopeful that the transition team's recommendations would aid in the resolution of these issues. Instead, the valid points in the transition report are overshadowed by the inaccuracies that are peppered throughout the report," he said.

In closing his report, Tenorio touched on the fact that CPA was given a hard time obtaining the transition report and was only officially given the signed version when CPA was asked to address concerns during a previous Senate session.

"I also want to note the difficulties CPA had in obtaining this transition report. Earlier this month, CPA submitted an Open Government Act request, requesting that it be provided a copy of the transi-

tion report. In response, CPA was informed that the report was being withheld because it was an 'internal document.' The response stated that the transition report will be provided 'Should action be taken regarding CPA due to the contents of the transition report,'" he said.

"CPA later obtained the transition report from Sen. Paul Manglona (Ind-Rota), who referred to information contained within that report at the March 15, 2023, Senate Standing Committee on Public Utilities, Transportation and Communications Public Hearing. Although CPA was asked to be present and provide comments at that PUTC public hearing, CPA was not afforded an opportunity to review the transition report prior to that hearing," Tenorio added.



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PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

NMHC hereby publicly discloses that on July 14, 2021, **Luise C. Villagomez**, an immediate family member of **Vioncee V. Reyes**, an employee of the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation- CDBG-DR Program, applied for assistance under the Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Housing Program.

Said applicant has been determined to be a member of a group or class of low to moderate income individuals intended to be beneficiaries of the assisted activity and is applying to receive generally the same benefits being made available to the group or class. Ms. Reyes is not and shall not be involved in the handling of this loan application.

NMHC discloses this possible conflict pursuant to 24 CFR 92.356 in order to allow any interested persons to comment before the application is considered for an exception under the applicable conflict regulations.

Written comments may be faxed to Fax No.: (670) 234-9451, mailed to P.O. Box 500514 Saipan, MP 96950, or emailed to cnmi-cdbg-dr@nmhc.gov on or before **Wednesday, April 5, 2023**.

Dated this 22nd day of March, 2023.

/s/
JESSE S. PALACIOS
Corporate Director



COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INVITATION FOR BID CUC-IFB-23-006

Isley Field and Obyan Wells Granular Activated Carbon Water Filtration System Construction Project

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Isley Field and Obyan Wells Granular Activated Carbon Water Filtration System Construction Project for IF 208, OB 6, OB 19 and OB 23 in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The project consists of the installation of Owner Furnished GAC units, chain link fence removal and installation of new chain link fence, connection of the new waterline to existing waterline, connection of the influent and effluent lines of the GAC units to the existing waterline.

The project is funded by a grant from the United States of Economic Development Authority (USEDA) and OIA. The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USED A and OIA.

CUC requires the project to be completed in **210 calendar days** from date of award of contract.

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The IFB package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of \$200.00 for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by site visits will be held on **March 31, 2023 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No. 17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) copies of the bid MUST be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-IFB-23-006, Isley Field and Obyan Wells Granular Activated Carbon Water Filtration System Construction Project"** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on April 25, 2023**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before due date and time. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement this form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

A Bid Guarantee of not less than fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety.

A Payment Bond of one hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). Bidders are required to submit clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract. Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered bidders and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on April 7, 2023** to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, Jr., CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email address, manny.sablan@cucgov.org, with a copy to Larry Manacop, Acting Chief Engineer, Water/Wastewater via email at larry.manacop@cucgov.org, Dennis Formalejo, Engineer, Senior via email at dennis.formalejo@cucgov.org and Ms. Christie L. Sablan, Senior Administrative Technician via email address at christie.sablan@cucgov.org. CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and waive any defects in said bid proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Another vehicle fire

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services responded to another vehicle fire, this time in Chalan Laulau, but the fire was soon contained and no one was hurt.

According to DFEMS spokesper-

son Rob Mojica, a male caller reported over the weekend that a sedan was on fire in Chalan Laulau near Priority Care.

He said a male caller, Michael Gioda, reported a vehicle fire on the roadway toward Priority Care on Sunday, March 26, 2023, at approximately 8:35am.

DFEMS responded at 8:36am and a unit was on scene at 8:41am. The vehicle fire was contained at 8:51am.

DFEMS' Division of Fire Prevention and Arson Investigation was unable to determine the cause of the fire.

"The cause of the fire will be posted at a later time. Fire Classification: undetermined," Mojica said.

Just over a week ago, DFEMS reported a vehicle fire on Capital Hill near the old Passport Office.

The fire got started after the driver of the vehicle lost control and rammed a tree.

Fire Investigator Benjamin Paul Manglona stated in his report that a 22-year-old male was heading home from Garapan when he lost control of his vehicle while trying to avoid pot-

holes. The vehicle hit a tree, causing the fire to start in the engine compartment not long after the impact.

According to a DFEMS press release, DPS officers reported the vehicle that was in flames at around 4:39am. The vehicle fire was contained at 5:03am.

Good turnout for Fishers Forum

By **LEIGH GASES**
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The CNMI Fishers Forum hosted by the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council at the Hibiscus Hall of the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan on Monday drew over 100 participants throughout the night visiting the information tables and attending the presentations on bottomfish in CNMI waters.

Present during the forum were Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, former representative Christina Sablan, representatives of government agencies, different organizations, young adults, fishermen, and others.

"I think it's a good turnout. A lot of people wanted to come out and showcase some of the work that they do, whether it's in their office, or in their company, or in their association," said Michael Tenorio, who is the Fisheries Section supervisor at the Division of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Lands and



LEIGH GASES

Tony Guerrero, center, and Lino Tenorio, left, are seen in their information table during the CNMI Fishers Forum hosted by the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council at the Hibiscus Hall of the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan Monday night.

Natural Resources. "It's nice to see kids here. We've got to educate the youngsters, and them being exposed to these events acclimates them to understand issues."

Information tables present were the Division of Environmental Quality of the Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality; Sea Turtle Program of the Department of Lands and Natural Resources; DLNR Division of Fish & Wildlife; Division of Coastal Resources Management; bottomfish demo by Tony Guerrero;

Micronesian Environmental Services; and the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council.

The council meeting on Saipan convenes fishery agencies and fishermen to discuss fisheries management in the offshore waters of Hawai'i, American Samoa, Guam, the CNMI, and the Pacific Remote Island Areas.

Upon the council's arrival last March 24, they held meetings at the Crowne Plaza and online. The council is going to Guam next to hold a series of meetings there as well.

PAYMENT

From Page 1

to serve as Finance secretary.

Sen. Celina R. Babauta (D-Saipan), who chairs the Senate Executive Appointments and Government Investigations Committee, said that many retirees are very concerned about receiving 25% of their pensions.

The CNMI government is mandated by a federal court settlement order to pay only 75% of government retirees' pensions. The previous Torres administration had been adding into the payment of the 25% portion of the pensions to ensure that retirees get 100% of their monthly pensions.

Babauta asked if the current administration has any plan to sus-

pend the 25% payment this fiscal year because the revenue is tight and the subject has been raised in budget meetings.

At this point, Norita said, they are fully aligned together to provide that 25% payment to the retirees and that they did include that in the revised budget proposal for fiscal year 2023.

Norita said their fiscal team is working hard to ensure that the Federal Emergency Management Agency will reimburse them at least \$58 million that will be used to cover the 25%.

"So I do reassure the retirees that we are working hard to fulfill that commitment," she said.

As to the question if there is any contingency plan if that FEMA reimbursement does not materialize,

Norita said the urgency right now is to expedite those FEMA reimbursements so that funding for the 25% can be secured for the retirees.

She disclosed that, as of their last fiscal response meeting, the Public Assistance Office did share that they are looking forward of at least \$58 million that has been provided to FEMA for review and approval.

Most of the reimbursements represent funding the CNMI used to recover from Super Typhoon Yutu in 2018. Because the typhoon was declared a national disaster, that set the way for the release of federal funds to help the CNMI recover. While waiting for the federal funds, the CNMI used its own funds for the recovery process; FEMA is supposed the reimburse the CNMI that local money.

TANAPAG

From Page 1

its full capacity.

In order to extend the cemetery's capacity, CHCC chief executive officer Esther L. Muña has asked for Gov. Arnold I. Palacios' help in clearing a portion of the cemetery to allow for a little more expansion and create more available space.

In her letter dated March 17, 2023 to Palacios, Muña said that extending the use of the Tanapag Public Cemetery for a few more years will ensure that proper burial plots "are accessible to bereaved families seeking the final resting place [for] their loved ones."

Muña also recommended that the EHDP notify the Department of

Lands and Natural Resources, which is the lead agency assigned to oversee the Marpi Public Cemetery, about the limited burial plots remaining at the Tanapag cemetery so it can start making plans now.

Muña said the EHDP recently assessed the capacity status of the Tanapag Public Cemetery and found that it is now on its last section of cleared land to accommodate, at most, an additional 20 burial plots.

Based on Vital Statistics data, Muña said, an average of approximately 50 burials were accommodated per year between 2015-2022.

Consequently, EHDP issues nearly five burial permits per month to process for new plot assignments at the Tanapag Public Cemetery.

To help alleviate this issue, Muña said the Tanapag Public Cemetery re-

quires extensive land clearing and the removal of buried concrete slabs and other debris obstructing a significant amount of space on the north section that may be used for future burial plot assignments.

By clearing that area of land and incorporating routine maintenance, it will allow the EHDP to extend the use of the cemetery for an additional five to 10 years and further increase plot assignments, Muna said.

She noted that, in case the Tanapag Public Cemetery meets its capacity, the next designated public cemetery pursuant to Public Law 1-117 is the Marpi Public Cemetery. Muña said the Marpi Public Cemetery, however, is currently nonoperational due to "a variety of challenges."

'RESPECT

From Page 1

is the purpose of the council. But we need to start talking, respecting and considering the consequences of our decisions."

Archie Soliai, American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources chair, said all Pacific Island cultures have respect in common. He stated that these federal actions "are done without consultation of our Pacific communities and are very disrespectful. Where is the environmental justice and equity that this administration has prioritized?" He quoted American Samoa Delegate Amata Radewagen (R-AS), who has said this announcement equates to "conservation by confiscation without consultation."

Council member Will Sword of American Samoa said that further closures of U.S. waters in the Pacific would be "the death knell" of the tuna industry that supports almost a third of the territory's workforce.

The council asked NOAA, and all other involved agencies, to consult with the U.S. Pacific territories beyond the public comment opportunity on the proposed sanctuary. To better understand the council's role and responsibilities in the process, the council will request the National Ocean Service to give a presentation on the proposed sanctuary at its next meeting.

Palacios also expressed apprehension over increasing illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, or IUU, and increased tensions with China in the region. "I continue to support the efforts of the council to address these concerns, which are efforts to protect

the interests of the three U.S. Pacific territories," he said.

The council approved a three-year Marine Conservation Plan for the CNMI, which outlines priorities for fishery infrastructure, capacity, research and development projects. The plan is important to manage and conserve the region's unique marine ecosystems. The council will ask Palacios to provide the MCP to NOAA for final approval.

The council plans to engage with local leaders and stakeholders from the northern islands of the CNMI on community-based fishing management plans to ensure adequate representation from those communities. The council also asked NOAA to tailor its equity and environmental justice community engagement plans to each island in the CNMI.

On Monday, the council held at the Hibiscus Hall of the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan its first in-person Fishers Forum in the Marianas since 2018, focusing on the history of bottomfishing, different fishing gears and methods, and the science and management of bottomfishing in the region. Renowned Saipan deep bottom fishers Lino Tenorio and Tony Guerrero gave a brief training session on their gear preparation and techniques used to catch bottomfish. They shared their knowledge on using environmental cues and ocean characteristics to determine the best time to fish for certain species.

Six partner government and private organizations joined the council to share their conservation and management messages with approximately 60 community members. Attendees enjoyed a buffet dinner sponsored by Palacios. (PR)

RIOS

From Page 1

Works secretary Ray N. Yumul received overwhelming support during his confirmation hearing.

Oscar M. Babauta, who is the special assistant for the administration of Palacios-Apatang, told the Senate Executive Appointments and Government Investigations Committee that Rios had asked to postpone the confirmation hearing as he is taking care of a pressing personal matter. Rios appeared in the Senate chamber, but did not speak to the committee.

Saipan Tribune learned that Rios had briefly met with Senate EAGI Committee chair Sen. Celina R. Babauta (D-Saipan) in the latter's office before the hearing.

With respect to Ray Yumul's confirmation hearing, several DPW officials, members of the community, and government officials, including his brother, Rep. Ralph N. Yumul (Ind-Saipan), and Rep. Edwin K.

Propst (D-Saipan) testified to express their strong support for Ray Yumul's confirmation.

Ray Yumul disclosed at the hearing that due to the termination of American Rescue Plan Act-funded staff within DPW, the department's head count has dropped from 157 to 89.

In talking about the six DPW divisions, including a couple of divisions that need serious attention, Yumul disclosed that in the works are online access to DPW's applications and informational website; promulgating a fee structure for floodplain survey requests; restoring the

10% tax earmarked for the solid waste revolving fund (Public Law 13-42 reduced it to 7%); and sustaining the 5-cent per can recycling program beyond its initial timeframe. The Office of Grants Management, the Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality, and Coastal Resources Management will implement the can recycling program from April 1 to August 2023 only.



Yumul



LEADERSHIP TRAINING
A total of 125 JROTC cadets from four CNMI JROTC programs visit the American Memorial Park Visitors Center as part of the four-day Leadership Training they went through from March 23 to 26, 2023, at the Saipan Southern High Schools campus.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

OIA now accepting applications for energy projects in US territories

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The U.S. Department of the Interior’s Office of Insular Affairs has announced that proposals are now being accepted for the Energizing Insular Commu-

nities grant program for fiscal year 2023. The anticipated total funding available to the territories is \$15.5 million. Those eligible to apply are local government entities, independent

authorities, and educational institutions located in the U.S. territories of American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The deadline to apply is June 15, 2023.

“OIA’s EIC 2023 funds are now available to support the territories in achieving sustainable energy strategies that mitigate climate change, reduce reliance and expenditures on imported fuels, develop and utilize domestic energy sources, and improve the performance of energy infrastructure and overall energy efficiency,” said Carmen G.

Cantor, assistant secretary for Insular and International Affairs. “I would encourage the territories to embrace this important opportunity through OIA and submit applications for consideration as soon as possible.”

Each proposal will be reviewed and evaluated for two important criteria:

1) whether the proposal is directly tied to the territory’s respective strategic energy plan, energy action

plan, or integrated resource plan; and,

2) whether there is a projected energy cost savings to end-users.

All applications should be submitted through either Grantsolutions.gov or Grants.gov, where the EIC grant is listed under the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number 15.875. For additional information visit <https://www.doi.gov/oia/financial-assistance>. (*DOI*)


CNMI Judiciary adopts new Rules of Guardianship Procedure

The NMI Supreme Court formally adopted last Monday, March 28, 2023, the Northern Mariana Islands Rules of Guardianship Procedure. These rules are intended to clarify and streamline court proceedings to determine the appointment of guardians for minors and incompetent adults.

After being finalized by the Supreme Court Rules Committee, the Rules of Guardianship Procedure were submitted to the Legislature for approval. On March 9, the House of Representatives voted to approve the proposed rules, finding them to be “necessary for modernization and expedition purposes.” The Senate neither approved nor disapproved of the rules, and they became effective 60 days after submission according to the NMI Constitution.

According to House Committee findings and public comments from judiciary representatives, the Rules of Guardianship Procedure were based heavily on existing provisions in the Rules of Probate Procedure. The Rules Committee found it necessary to extract these rules and place them in a standalone set. Additional changes will promote expediency and modernization of guardianship proceedings.

A copy of the NMI Rules of Guardianship Procedure can be accessed at <https://cnmilaw.org/pdf/courtrules/R37.pdf>. (*PR*)



SAIPAN HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
Office of the Mayor
Municipality of Saipan

NOTICE OF REGULAR SHEFA BOARD MEETING

In accordance with 1 CMC § 9901 et seq., as amended, the Saipan Higher Education Financial Assistance (SHEFA) Board is hereby giving notice of its regular board meeting, to be held on March 29th, 2023, at 9:30 a.m., Office of SHEFA conference room, 2nd Floor, CTC Building, Oleai Beach Road, Saipan.

AGENDA

I. Preliminary Matters

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Adoption of Agenda
4. Adoption of Minutes from February 23rd, 2022

II. Public Comment (s)

III. Committee Reports

- a. Committee on Awards
- b. Committee on Appeal/Deferments/Forbearance
- c. Committee on Policy and Procedures
- d. Committee on Program and Development
- e. Committee of Fiscal, Legislative, and Community Affairs

IV. Administrator's Report

V. Chairman's Report

VI. Old Business

1. Action on proposal to increase the grant-in-aid for on-island and online recipients to match the award of off-island recipients
2. Action to temporarily suspend awards for advanced degrees
3. Action on proposal to extend the financial assistance to 3 years for recipients pursuing an associate's degree within the healthcare field

VII. New Business

1. Spring 2023 application status
2. Expiration terms of board members
3. Legal Counsel
4. Status of Proa Promise (Northern Marianas College)


VIII. Executive Session

IX. Miscellaneous Matters

X. Next Meeting

XI. Adjournment

/s/ Oscar M. Babauta,
Chairman, Board of SHEFA Directors



NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514

PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

NMHC hereby publicly discloses that on July 21, 2021, **Vincent M. & Rose Marie B. Pangelinan**, immediate family members of **Geraldine A. Borja**, an NMHC employee, applied for assistance under the Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Housing Program.



Said applicant has been determined to be a member of a group or class of low-income persons intended to be beneficiaries of the assisted activity and is applying to receive generally the same benefits being made available to the group or class. Ms. Borja is not and shall not be involved in the handling of this loan application.

NMHC discloses this possible conflict pursuant to 24 CFR 92.356 in order to allow any interested persons to comment before the application is considered for an exception under the applicable conflict regulations.

Written comments may be faxed to Fax No.: (670) 234-9451, mailed to P.O. Box 500514 Saipan, MP 96950, or emailed to cnmi-cdbg-dr@nmhcgov.net on or before **Wednesday, April 5, 2023**.

Dated this 22nd day of March, 2023.

/s/
JESSE S. PALACIOS
Corporate Director



COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION

INVITATION FOR BIDS

CUC-IFB-23-013

RELOCATION OF EXISTING 0.065 MG MODULAR TANK IN KAGMAN

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Relocation of Existing 0.065 MG Modular Tank in Kagman, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The project consists of furnishing all labor, supervision, equipment and materials for the relocation of an existing water tank within San Vicente Water tank site to the existing Kagman booster pump station site. Work includes, but is not limited to disassembly and relocation of an existing 65,000-gallon modular fiberglass potable water tank; demolition and disposal of existing temporary tank plinth at San Vicente Tank site; construction of tank foundation; installation of relocated tank, piping and appurtenances; and other related work. The work shall be done in accordance with the Project Plans and Specifications and without disruption to the daily operation of the water system.

This project is funded by a grant from the us Public Law 117-2 American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA).

CUC requires the Project to be completed in **120 calendar days** from date of award of contract.

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of \$200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by a Site Visit is scheduled on **April 12, 2023 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked “**CUC-IFB-23-013, Relocation of the Existing 0.065 MG Modular Water Tank in Kagman**”, to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on May 2, 2023**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement the form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

A Bid Guarantee of not less than fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety.

A Payment Bond of one hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). Bidders are required to submit clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract. Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract.

All questions or request for clarification regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on April 19, 2023** to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email at manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Ms. Alley Reyes, Project Engineer via email at alley.reyes@cucgov.org and Ms. Christie Sablan, Procurement & Supply, Senior Administrative Technician via email at christie.sablan@cucgov.org

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

DR. DALLAS M. PEAVEY, JR.
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

3-week Operation Rematau sees USCG working with CNMI partners

By CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER SARA MUIR
U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam

SANTA RITA, Guam—The crew of USCGC *Myrtle Hazard* (WPC 1139) returned to Guam on March 20, 2023, following a three-week deployment to the CNMI as part of the ongoing. During the patrol, the crew aided U.S. government partners and conducted and supported five Coast Guard missions, including search and rescue, maritime law enforcement, living marine resource protection, aids to

navigation, and ports, waterways, and coastal security. To kick off the patrol, the crew transferred personnel and equipment from Maritime Safety and Security Teams Honolulu and Seattle for a surge operation in the vicinity of Saipan. The cutter crew provided weapons, area familiarization, additional boarding team personnel, and small boat support for two weeks. The MSSTs conducted a boating safety operation to ensure compliance with federal and local requirements. They also pro-



U.S. COAST GUARD FORCES MICRONESIA
Lt. j.g. Dale Walters keeps a lookout from the bridge of the USCGC *Myrtle Hazard* (WPC 1139) for a missing 31-year-old spearfisher near Blue Hole, Guam, on March 17, 2023.

Guard endeavor Operation Blue Pacific to promote security, safety, sovereignty, and economic prosperity in Oceania. Rematau means people of the deep sea. It recognizes the wisdom of the Pacific Island Forum leaders in that securing the future requires long-term vision and a carefully considered regional strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. Op Rematau reinforces U.S. commitment to working together to advance Pacific regionalism based on the Blue Pacific narrative. This action supports U.S.

national security objectives, bolstering regional maritime governance and security. The *Myrtle Hazard* is the 39th 154-foot Sentinel-class fast response cutter named for the first enlisted woman, an electrician, and radio operator, in the U.S. Coast Guard. They homeport in Guam, working for U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam, which comprises nearly 300 personnel and provides a significant portion of the U.S. Coast Guard's enduring regional presence in Oceania.



U.S. COAST GUARD FORCES MICRONESIA
Lt. j.g. Dale Walters keeps a lookout from the bridge of the USCGC *Myrtle Hazard* (WPC 1139) for a missing 31-year-old spearfisher near Blue Hole, Guam, on March 17, 2023.



U.S. COAST GUARD FORCES MICRONESIA
At sea conditions as seen from the USCGC *Myrtle Hazard* (WPC 1139) off Guam's west side on the afternoon of March 17, 2023. Responders searched for a missing 31-year-old male spearfisher off Blue Hole, last seen wearing a red wetsuit and fins on March 16.

MARIANAS VISITORS AUTHORITY
P.O. BOX 500861 CK
SAIPAN, MP 96950
TEL: (670) 664-3200/1
FAX: (670) 664-3237
info@mymarianas.com
www.mymarianas.com

SPECIAL BOARD MEETING NOTICE

Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section 11, the Marianas Visitors Authority hereby gives notice that a **Special Board of Directors Meeting** will be held on **Thursday, March 30, 2023 at 10:30 a.m.** at the **MVA Conference Room.**

MEETING AGENDA

- 1) Preliminary Matters**
 - a. Call to Order
 - b. Roll Call
 - c. Adoption of Agenda
- 2) Public Comments**
- 3) Committee Reports**
 - a. Finance Committee
 - i. Fund Status Report
 - ii. Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Submission
 - iii. Cost Containment Measures for FY 2023 – Directive 2023-002
 - b. Adhoc Committees
 - i. Korea Adhoc
 - ii. Japan Adhoc
- 4) Old Business**
 - a. RFP for Office Space
- 5) New Business**
 - a. Board Resolution – Bank Signatories
 - b. CDBG-DR Funding
 - c. Sponsorship Request
 - i. Commonwealth Council for Arts and Culture – Flame Tree Arts Festival (April 21-23, 2023)
 - ii. Niziu Sponsorship Request
 - iii. Marianas Tourism Education Council (MTEC) – MTEC Annual Golf Tournament
 - iv. Micronesian Racing Association – 40th Anniversary Smokin Wheels Guam
 - d. Printing of CNMI Customs Declaration Form
 - e. Office Space Rental
 - f. General Membership Meeting
 - g. Project Updates
 - i. Best of the Marianas (BOM) - Wrap up Report by Marianas Variety
 - ii. Banzai Cliff Railings
- (6) Executive Session**
 - a. Managing Director Position
- (7) Miscellaneous/Announcements**
 - a. Next Regular Board Meeting
 - b. Others
- (8) Adjournment**

/s/ Gloria Cavanagh
Acting Chairperson, MVA Board of Directors

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514

PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

NMHC hereby publicly discloses that on February 23, 2021, **Estevan P. Cabrera**, a member of the 19th Tinian Municipal Council, applied for assistance under the Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Housing Program.

Said applicant has been determined to be a member of a group or class of individuals who meet the national objective of urgent need and intended to be beneficiaries of the assisted activity and is applying to receive generally the same benefits being made available to the group or class. Mr. Cabrera is not and shall not be involved in the handling of this loan application.

NMHC discloses this possible conflict pursuant to 24 CFR 92.356 in order to allow any interested persons to comment before the application is considered for an exception under the applicable conflict regulations.

Written comments may be faxed to Fax No.: (670) 234-9451, mailed to P.O. Box 500514 Saipan, MP 96950, or emailed to cnmi-cdbg-dr@nmhcgov.net on or before **Wednesday, April 5, 2023.**

Dated this 22nd day of March, 2023.

/s/
JESSE S. PALACIOS
Corporate Director

vided support and a search and rescue stand-by during the 4th Annual Wahoo in the Marianas Derby. “Our crew worked to overcome logistical challenges by providing the cutter as a mobile armory and small boat staging area for our MSST shipmates, enabling their effort and ensuring weapons, ammunition, and the small boat remained secure when not in use,” said Lt. Jalle Merritt, commanding officer of *Myrtle Hazard*. “It’s great to be up in the CNMI and to provide these services to enhance boating safety and aid our local partners. We thank the people of Saipan for their hospitality during our stay.” The cutter crew also supported local agents from the Drug Enforcement Agency and Navy Criminal Investigations Service by coordinating and completing a substantial transfer of ammunition, a required tool for the agents. Ammunition is costly and difficult to ship due to its weight and status as a hazardous item. The cutter is outfitted with an armory allowing them to safely and rapidly transport this tool adhering to government guidelines. The team also enabled an aid to navigation mission on Rota. The team provided transportation and use of a small boat to four members of the USCGC *Sequoia* (WLB 215) to conduct repairs to a range day board and complete general inspections and maintenance. “We don’t often get to say a Fast Response Cutter did aids to navigation,” said Merritt. “We were pleased

to assist the team from Sequoia to conduct this activity which safeguards mariners while their ship is at its Mid-life Maintenance Availability on the East Coast.” Most notably, the crew participated in their second major search and rescue case in as many months. They spent nearly three days as part of the team searching for a free diver who was spearfishing near Blue Hole off Guam. Responders conducted 24 searches over 70 hours, covering over 1,302 square nautical miles before the Service suspended the active search. “It’s never easy to accept this kind of outcome to a search and rescue case. That and the weather conditions take a toll on the crew, but we trust our efforts can give the family some small measure of comfort as they grieve for their loved one,” said Merritt. “We appreciate the support of all the partners who worked this case and our Coast Guard aviation colleagues.” During the patrol, the crew overcame several maintenance issues, including a problem with the sea strainers, which filter the water used to cool the ship’s engines. They also required a replacement hydraulic hose for the winch used to move the small boat. The MH-65 Dolphin helicopter crew deployed to Guam was invaluable in transporting that replacement part on short notice from Guam to Saipan. Operation Rematau is how U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam supports the overarching Coast

OFLC provides CW-1 webinar materials and info

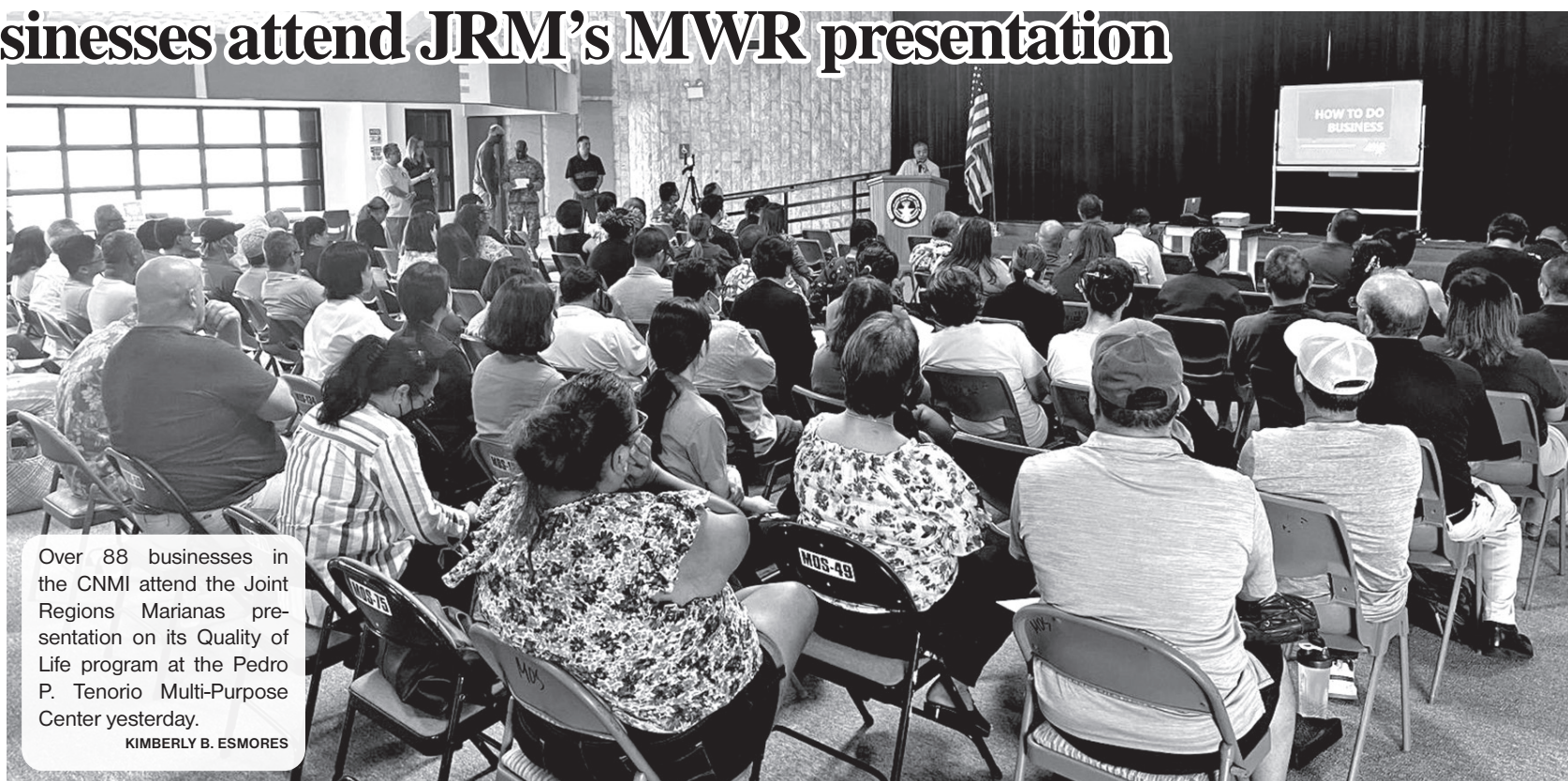
On March 20, 2023, the Office of Foreign Labor Certification conducted a webinar to provide an overview on common issues the National Processing Center has identified with CW-1 Applications for Temporary Employment Certification and offered filing tips that can minimize the common application errors. The presentation materials are now available at the links below and located on our website under the “Webinars” tab at the bottom of the CW-1 Program page: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/foreign-labor/programs/cw-1>. ■ View the slides of the CW-1 webinar: <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/oflc/pdfs/CW-1%20Webinar%202023-2023%20Final.pdf> ■ View the webinar recording: <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/oflc/media/CW-1%20Program%20FY2023%20Update%20%26%20Helpful%20Filing%20Tips.mp4> (PR)

Over 88 businesses attend JRM's MWR presentation

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Joint Regions Marianas presentation of its Quality of Life program, which essentially gives local businesses a chance to partner with JRM to sell its products and services to military personnel in Guam, has piqued the interest of over 88 local businesses in the CNMI.

According to Kim Camacho, executive director of the Saipan Chamber of Commerce, the presentation at the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center turned out great, with dozens of local business owners showing their interest in the launch of military tourism in the CNMI.



Over 88 businesses in the CNMI attend the Joint Regions Marianas presentation on its Quality of Life program at the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center yesterday.

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

9th Annual Women's Summit this Friday

By **CHRYSTAL MARINO**
chrystal_marino@saipantribune.com
CORRESPONDENT

Celebrating women entrepreneurs in the CNMI, the Office of the Governor's Women's Affairs Office, and the CNMI Women's Association are partnering to host the 9th Annual Women's Summit taking place this Friday, March 31, at the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe.

The event will be open for registration at 7:30am and will continue until its conclusion at about 4:30pm. The summit will feature keynote speakers, and include interactive workshops and panelists led by women entrepreneurs, and female leaders and advocates in the area of health, economy, culture, and peace.

The theme for the 2023 summit is one that both organizations have advocated for throughout the month, "wellness," with each letter in the word describing the focus of both organizations this month and year (Women Entrepreneurs Leading Life and Nourishing Economic Sustainable Solutions). The organizations shared in their announcement that they want to not only empower women, but also see that "women are fully engaged in the political, economic, and social development of our Commonwealth."

Both organizations are inviting members of the community to come to the event, show support and celebrate resident women entrepreneurs. For more information call 670-233-8978/9411 or visit cnmiwomen.org/summit-sign-up/. You may also email them at cnmiwomen@gmail.com or check out their social pages on Facebook, YouTube, or Instagram: Just search @cnmiwomen.

"Today's presentation, I feel, was a very big success. We had over 88 participants to hear from the JRM representatives and learned the different opportunities these businesses can avail with the JRM's [Morale, Welfare, and Recreation] program," she said.

Camacho said this is the perfect time to open up these discussions with local businesses as about 5,000 military personnel have been deployed to Guam and are looking into availing of new experiences with their families on their leisure time.

"These military personnel do not have the time to travel to the mainland to visit their families, so a lot of these individuals are looking for an alternative choice. Through this MWR program, military personnel based in Guam can learn about all the things the

CNMI has to offer," she said.

Camacho believes that the CNMI embarking on military tourism is a "great opportunity for our economy to grow," given the recent decision made by Gov. Arnold I. Palacios to pivot away from the China market.

"This is an alternative to Gov. Palacios' pivot from the China market. This is a great substitute to that loss. I think this will really help us build back our economy," she said.

Daniel Aquino, Commonwealth Bureau of Military Affairs special assistant, is hopeful that, after this presentation and the amount of support received by JRM, he hopes plans for military tourism will soon come into fruition.

"We hope on the military's end, we can see

something fruitful from this presentation. Meanwhile, businesses and the community should get prepared to welcome more military personnel. We encourage everyone to give the governor's initiative for military tourism a chance," he said.

Speaking on behalf of concern other members of the community may have about having a strong military presence on Saipan, he said the MWR will promote the CNMI as a family destination, in hopes of keeping CNMI locals, as well as military tourists, safe.

"There's always that problem everywhere you go; it's not just Guam. I think that's why one of the points of the MWR is to promote the CNMI to military families," he said.

18TH Youth Congress hosts 2023 Youth Congress Summit



Senate President Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) serves as one of the guest speakers at the 2023 Youth Congress Summit hosted by the 18th CNMI Youth Congress in the House of Representatives chamber yesterday.

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The 18th CNMI Youth Congress hosted yesterday the 2023 Youth Congress Summit, an event that was last held in 2016, in the House of Representatives chamber.

Youth senators Zenn Ichiro E. Tomokane of Marianas High School and Tamisha Lia D. Sablan of Kagman High School co-chaired this year's summit, with 18th CNMI Youth Congress speaker Yuri-Hana DLG. Sasamoto giving the opening remarks.

Senate President Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) was the first guest speaker, followed by Reps. Marissa R. Flores (Ind-Saipan) and Denita K. Yangetmai (D-Saipan). Rep. Julie A. Ogo (Ind-Rota) was scheduled as the guest

speaker yesterday afternoon.

Tomokane said in a later interview that, because it is March, their summit centered around Women History Month and they invited female lawmakers.

Tomokane said they have student representatives gathered from each of CNMI high schools. "Each is working to prepare some bills, to introduce grant proposals and to really shows them what the Youth Congress is all about," he said, adding that he is very happy with the turnout.

CNMI Youth Congress secretary/coordinator Luis John DLG Castro said that, by law, the Youth Congress is supposed to host the summit annually. The first summit started in 2002 and this is the first time since pre-COVID that it's being held.

"It's pretty significant that this event is being held in a milestone year for the Youth Congress," he said. It's been 25 years since the very first CNMI Youth Congress was convened.

Castro said over 30 representatives from different high schools, including from Tinian and Rota, participated in the summit. Many are school leaders, such as class presidents and officers.

"Everybody that is sitting around this table are the best and the brightest of their school communities. And what a better way for them to discuss issues with elected officials that represent them," said Castro, who also previously served as speaker of the 4th CNMI Youth Congress and is a former member of the 21st House of Representatives.

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)
RFP23-CHCC-011

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: APRIL 17th, 2023 TIME: 10:00AM (CHST)

"CHCC INPATIENT ROOM RENOVATIONS
(COORDINATION, OVERSIGHT, MONITORING AND CONSTRUCTION)
FOR CHC HOSPITAL / INPATIENT DEPARTMENT"

INTERESTED PARTIES CAN DOWNLOAD THIS REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FROM THE CHCC WEBSITE [WWW.CHCC.HEALTH]. ONCE AT THE SITE, NAVIGATE TO **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS** TAB ON THE LEFT NAVIGATION BAR. CLICK ON THE URL FOR THIS RFP. YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO ENTER DATA TO ALLOW US TO TRACK ALL REQUESTS FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY.

THE CHCC RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL PROPOSAL AND TO WAIVE ANY IMPERFECTIONS IN ANY PROPOSAL. IF TO DO SO SHALL BE IN THE INTEREST OF THE CHCC. ALL PROPOSALS SHALL BECOME THE EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OF THE COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION.

/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA
CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ CORA P. ADA
DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)
RFP23-CHCC/MSO-009

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: APR 17TH, 2023 TIME: 10:00AM (CHST)

"PROCUREMENT OF GENERAL MEDICAL
SUPPLIES-STOCK ITEMS"

INTERESTED PARTIES CAN DOWNLOAD THIS REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FROM THE CHCC WEBSITE [WWW.CHCC.HEALTH]. ONCE AT THE SITE, NAVIGATE TO **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS** TAB ON THE LEFT NAVIGATION BAR. CLICK ON THE URL FOR THIS RFP. YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO ENTER DATA TO ALLOW US TO TRACK ALL REQUESTS FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY.

THE CHCC RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL PROPOSAL AND TO WAIVE ANY IMPERFECTIONS IN ANY PROPOSAL. IF TO DO SO SHALL BE IN THE INTEREST OF THE CHCC. ALL PROPOSALS SHALL BECOME THE EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OF THE COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION.

/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA
CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ CORA P. ADA
DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY

Opinion

Hafa Adair!

Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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Jayvee L. Vallejera EDITOR
jayvee_vallejera@saipantribune.com

Mark Rabago ASSOCIATE EDITOR
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com

MEMBER

AP The Associated Press

Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

The next chapter: COVID emergency draws down, but COVID will remain

The end of the pandemic has been less like a car slamming on the brakes and more like a ship that has turned off its engines and is slowly gliding to a stop.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul's weekday COVID communiqués, the descendants of former Gov. Andrew Cuomo's daily briefings that began three years ago, have come to a close, replaced by weekly updates that will count down towards the end of the federal health emergency in May. The Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center, which tracked the virus worldwide around the clock from the start, closed on March 10.

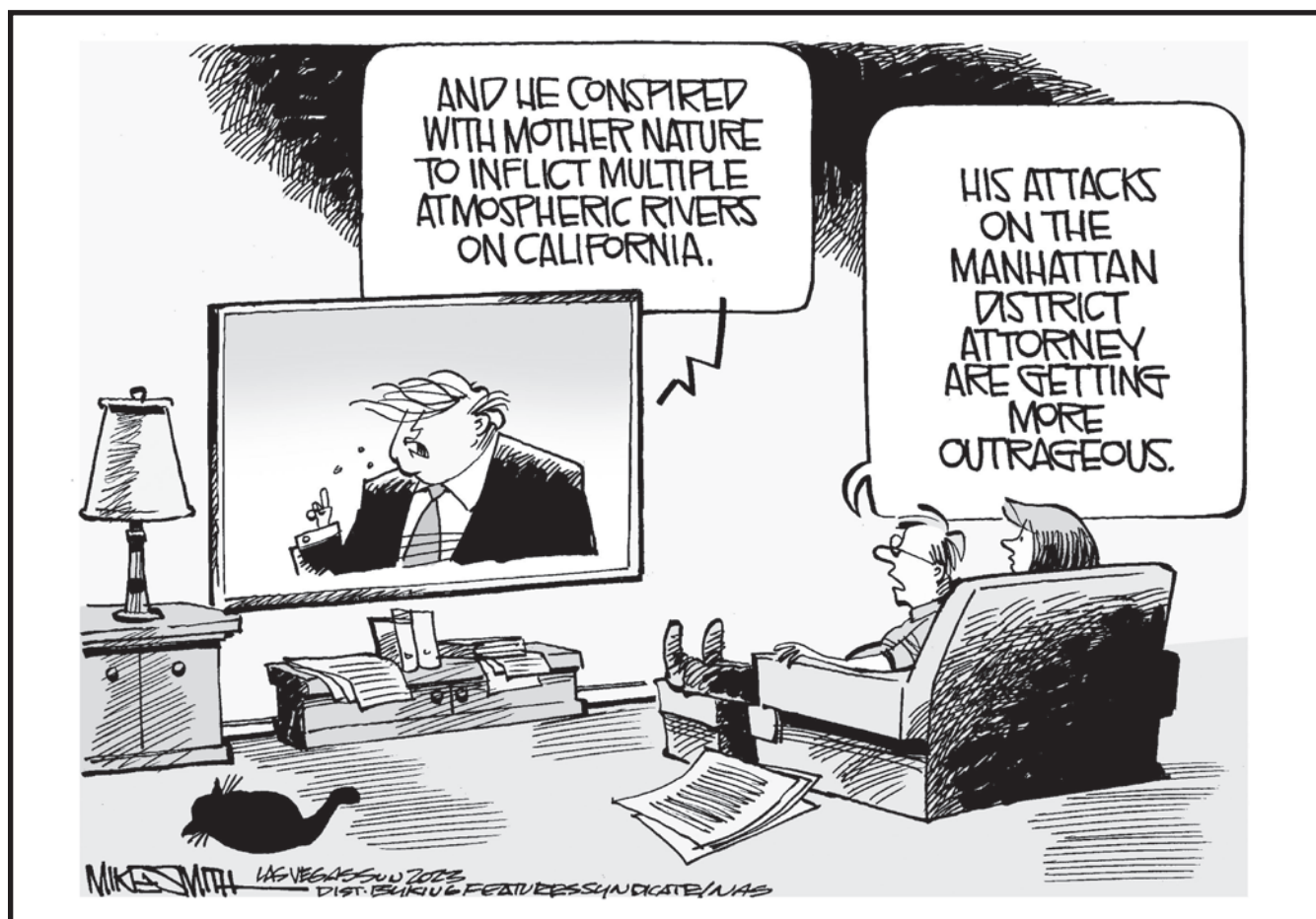
Once-ubiquitous masks have slipped from many faces, with some still choosing to wear them in public but most places having dropped their mandates. Litanies of COVID-specific programs in government, nonprofits, and academic and research institutions have tapered out, and many increasingly reference the pandemic as something that we lived through, and which is now fading.

But COVID is not gone. On Thursday, there were 11 deaths in New York state and hundreds more nationally. There remain thousands of hospitalizations among people at risk, primarily the unvaccinated and the elderly. There is always the chance that new variants will emerge, and in fact it's almost certain that the virus will continue transforming and permeating itself in some form pretty much indefinitely, which is why the particularly vulnerable, including senior citizens and those with comorbidities, should continue getting boosters when they are available.

Ultimately, one of the most lasting things that can come from the era of COVID is shifting how we respond to public health emergencies in the future. For years prior to the pandemic, the public and our leaders had been waving away warnings that a pathogen much like this could emerge and wreak havoc.

Now that we have survived, we can hope that policy-makers at every level will be better prepared for the next one, because COVID certainly won't be the last. That includes practical considerations, like keeping proper stocks of PPE, but also sociological ones, like understanding the damage that disinformation can inflict.

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As the Iraq War showed, the allure of consensus in foreign policy can be dangerous

With the 20th anniversary of the launch of the Iraq War, I'm reminded of the remarkable consensus behind that decision, which passed with strong bipartisan support. Experts, journalists and well-known media personalities joined the bandwagon too.

Often, consensus is good. It clears away opposition and helps make things happen. But too often, quick agreement on hard problems is a sign of dangerous groupthink instead.

This wide support has not aged well. It launched a bloody war, at a cost of \$2 trillion and an estimated 300,000 lives. It led to a violent insurgency and the creation of the Islamic State militant group. Generations of Iraqis will continue to suffer the consequences.

And so will America. Although the material suffering in Iraq dwarfs our own, I'm not sure America will ever escape the long tail of distrust that has understandably followed us since then.

The original sin was the decision to go to war on a dishonest pretext. That foundation gave rise to our use of torture, rendition, indefinite detention without due process, militarized policing back home and a severely undermined international reputation.

It's tempting to lay blame on individuals—President George W. Bush for leading the charge, or Vice President Dick Cheney or Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld for talking a perhaps unwitting president into action.

But this failure had a slew of enablers on both sides of the aisle and across the national security industry: people driven by fear, both personal and political, and simple, old-fashioned revenge. Emotion, not reason, drove this consensus, with patriotism playing a strong part too. It was easy to go along with the “Rah-rah America” refrain. Questioning it was considered weak, and the more who went along with it, the harder it was for others to raise their hand and object.

We like to laud consensus in America, particularly in an age of such extreme partisanship in our politics. But let Iraq be a reminder that agreement isn't necessarily a positive end in itself. Hard questions usually require hard answers, and it's rarely easy to reach a quick consensus on hard answers. The value of a consensus decision is no greater than the decision itself, and in the case of Iraq, the decision was catastrophic.

People naturally find comfort in consensus—it spreads out both credit and blame. But the danger of consensus is that it forecloses other, often better, ideas and the debate that a lack of consensus demands.

I write this today not simply to lament mistakes of the past but in hopes it makes us more cautious and self-aware in the future.

First, we must acknowledge the cost of our dishonesty in Iraq

By ELIZABETH SHACKELFORD

Chicago Tribune

Elizabeth Shackelford is a senior fellow on U.S. foreign policy with the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. She was previously a U.S. diplomat and is the author of *The Dis-sent Channel: American Diplomacy in a Dishonest Age*.



to our reputation within the world. Trust that is broken is hard to build back, and in our hubris, we haven't invested much in trying to do so. But distrust of what motivates our actions lingers.

Today, that legacy of dishonesty is undermining our efforts to build support for Ukraine. The prevailing American position is that we are right, Ukraine's defense is just, so other countries have no excuse to stay on the fence.

But the Global South has a justified skepticism of American forays in the name of democracy and human rights. By owning up to our own mistakes before and our role in undermining the international order we helped build, we might have greater traction in persuading more countries that they can trust our position today.

Second, we must be cautious in our approach to China, as it is a country we need to work with to face shared challenges like climate change and future pandemics. The growing bipartisan consensus on China, however, is driving us toward an aggressive stance that could put needed cooperation out of reach. The reality is that China is deeply economically integrated with the United States and our allies, and its economic and diplomatic engagement around the world translates into significant global sway.

This doesn't mean that we turn a blind eye to China's bad acts. America must be cautious about relying on China for national security-sensitive products and push back on China's maritime claims that threaten freedom of navigation in the major shipping lanes of the South China Sea. We should also continue to speak up in defense of democracy and human rights. But we must leave room for cooperation though, too. Calls for normalizing relations with Taiwan or openly committing to its defense are the kinds of decisions that could render cooperation impossible.

The best answer for our engagement with China is probably a complicated one unlikely to emerge from a consensus view. Just like in 2003, our political leaders might feel good haranguing a bad guy and assuring their constituents that they're ready to be tough, but a hard-line consensus toward China could march us into war again.

The consequences of that bad decision would be harder to ignore.

A rationale for student debt relief

One of the essential principles of free enterprise depends on an understanding so conventional that it largely goes unspoken: When people borrow money, they must pay it back—usually with interest.

We've established guardrails to protect naïve borrowers from usurious lenders, and defaulting on a loan has legal consequences. But our system reflects the good faith principle that borrowed money must be repaid.

Then how do we justify debt relief for students who borrowed money to go to college?

President Joe Biden's proposed program for student debt relief is a modest attempt to alleviate the financial pressure on students who left college—with or without a degree—under a staggering debt burden that currently amounts to \$1.7 trillion for 44 million Americans. Figures vary, but the average student debt is pushing \$30,000, and some students' financial liability reaches six figures.

Biden's proposal would help young Americans just beginning their careers by forgiving up to \$20,000 of debt. At present the proposal is stalled in the courts, and it is receiving considerable resistance from its opponents.

And why not? Why should college students be treated any differently than the purchaser of a home or automobile?

Consider this rationale for some debt relief for student borrowers:

A car or a house is a private good, owned and enjoyed by a single party. Once it's paid for, its ownership and use are unavailable to others except at the owner's discretion.

Public goods are the opposite of private goods. The term de-

scribes the facilities and services that are generally paid for by tax dollars and are available to and benefit everyone, for example, fire departments, police departments and public schools.

A college education is a hybrid between a public good and a private good. America has produced many excellent public colleges and universities and made them available to all students, originally at a reasonable cost. Generally we've expected students to pay part of the cost, but the public pays the rest because we've agreed that an educated society is healthier and stronger.

The essential problem is that public support for colleges and universities has eroded dramatically in the last several decades, and the costs of college have been pushed more and more onto students. What was once an affordable education is increasingly out of reach for many students, unless they take out loans.

Of course, it's easy to see why students who have already repaid loans acquired in order to pay the higher costs might begrudge debt relief for current students.

But it's also easy to see why all modern students might begrudge the opportunities that American college students enjoyed several decades ago. Such was America's belief in education and in itself that a student with modest means—me, for example—could finish graduate school with zero debt. None. College was simply more affordable in those days.

Here's a supporting rationale: The issue of student debt relief is skewed by a common mischaracterization of college as a four-year toga party, with a little studying interspersed with excessive drinking and revelry.

All stereotypes bear a grain of truth. But the cynic's vision of

By **JOHN M. CRISP**

Tribune News Service

John M. Crisp, an op-ed columnist for Tribune News Service, lives in Texas and can be reached at jcrispcolumns@gmail.com.



the dissipated college student describes very few of the thousands of students I encountered during three decades of college teaching, mostly in a community college.

As a rule, my students were older, serious and committed, and nearly all of them were working toward degrees—nursing, teaching, physical therapy, public safety and so on—that would benefit society as well as themselves.

And nearly all of them held jobs—part-time or full-time—in order to meet college costs. There was nothing unusual about a student stumbling into my freshman writing class the morning after clerking all night in a convenience store.

In short, we've lost sight of how much "sweat equity" college students put into their degrees, as well as how much their degrees benefit society as a whole.

Is large-scale student debt relief justified? I'm not sure. But there is a solid rationale for modest relief for students who have worked very hard, for themselves and for the rest of us as well.

There's no such thing as artificial intelligence

None sells the future more masterfully than the tech industry. According to its proponents, we will all live in the "metaverse," build our financial infrastructure on "web3" and power our lives with "artificial intelligence." All three of these terms are mirages that have raked in billions of dollars, despite bite back by reality.

Artificial intelligence in particular conjures the notion of thinking machines. But no machine can think, and no software is truly intelligent. The phrase alone may be one of the most successful marketing terms of all time.

Last week OpenAI announced GPT-4, a major upgrade to the technology underpinning ChatGPT. The system sounds even more humanlike than its predecessor, naturally reinforcing notions of its intelligence. But GPT-4 and other large language models like it are simply mirroring databases of text—close to a trillion words for the previous model—whose scale is difficult to contemplate. Helped along by an army of humans reprogramming it with corrections, the models glom words together based on probability. That is not intelligence.

These systems are trained to generate text that sounds plausible, yet they are marketed as new oracles of knowledge that can be plugged into search engines. That is foolhardy when GPT-4 continues to make errors, and it was only a few weeks ago that Microsoft Corp. and Alphabet Inc.'s Google both suffered embarrassing demos in which their new search engines glitched on facts.

Not helping matters: Terms like "neural networks" and "deep learning" only bolster the idea that these programs are humanlike. Neural networks aren't copies of the human brain in any way; they are only loosely inspired by its workings.

Long-running efforts to try and replicate the human brain with its roughly 85 billion neurons have all failed. The closest scientists have come is to emulating the brain of a worm, with 302 neurons.

We need a different lexicon that doesn't propagate magical thinking about computer systems, and doesn't absolve the people designing those systems from their responsibilities. What is a better alternative? Reasonable technologists have tried for years to replace "AI" with "machine learning systems," but that doesn't trip off the tongue in quite the same way.

Stefano Quintarelli, a former Italian politician and technologist came up with another alternative, "Systemic Approaches to Learning Algorithms and Machine Inferences" or SALAMI, to underscore the ridiculousness of the questions people have been posing about AI: Is SALAMI sentient? Will SALAMI ever have supremacy over humans?

The most hopeless attempt at a semantic alternative is probably the most accurate: "software."

"But," I hear you ask, "What is wrong with using a little metaphorical shorthand to describe technology that seems so magical?"

The answer is that ascribing intelligence to machines gives them undeserved independence from humans, and it abdicates their creators of responsibility for their impact. If we see ChatGPT as "intelligent," then we are less inclined to try and hold San Francisco startup OpenAI LP, its creator, to account for its inaccuracies and biases. It also creates a fatalistic compliance among humans who suffer technology's damaging effects; though "AI" will not take your job or plagiarize your artistic creations—other humans will.

By **PARMY OLSON**

Bloomberg Opinion

Parmy Olson is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering technology. A former reporter for the Wall Street Journal and Forbes, she is author of We Are Anonymous.



The issue is ever more pressing now that companies from Meta Platforms Inc. to Snap Inc. to Morgan Stanley are rushing to plug chatbots and text and image generators into their systems. Spurred by its new arms race with Google, Microsoft is putting OpenAI's language model technology, still largely untested, into its most popular business apps, including Word, Outlook and Excel. "Copilot will fundamentally change how people work with AI and how AI works with people," Microsoft said of its new feature.

But for customers, the promise of working with intelligent machines is almost misleading. "[AI is] one of those labels that expresses a kind of utopian hope rather than present reality, somewhat as the rise of the phrase 'smart weapons' during the first Gulf War implied a bloodless vision of totally precise targeting that still isn't possible," says Steven Poole, author of the book Unspeak, about the dangerous power of words and labels.

Margaret Mitchell, a computer scientist who was fired by Google after publishing a paper that criticized the biases in large language models, has reluctantly described her work as being based in "AI" over recent years. "Before... people like me said we worked on 'machine learning.' That's a great way to get people's eyes to glaze over," she admitted to a conference panel on Friday.

Her former Google colleague and founder of the Distributed Artificial Intelligence Research Institute, Timnit Gebru, said she also only started saying "AI" around 2013: "It became the thing to say."

"It's terrible but I'm doing this too," Mitchell added. "I'm calling everything that I touch 'AI' because then people will listen to what I'm saying."

Unfortunately, "AI" is so embedded in our vocabulary that it will be almost impossible to shake, the obligatory air quotes difficult to remember. At the very least, we should remind ourselves of how reliant such systems are on human managers who should be held accountable for their side effects.

Author Poole says he prefers to call chatbots like ChatGPT and image generators like Midjourney "giant plagiarism machines" since they mainly recombine prose and pictures that were originally created by humans. "I'm not confident it will catch on," he says.

In more ways than one, we really are stuck with "AI."

Cardona statement on congressional review act on student debt relief

By **MIGUEL CARDONA**
Special to the Saipan Tribune

U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona issued the following statement yesterday after Republicans introduced a congressional review act to put a stop to the one-time debt relief plan that would benefit millions of working families:

Republicans in Congress represent millions of borrowers who have applied for student debt relief. It's a shame for these borrowers—the overwhelming majority of whom make less than \$75,000 a year—and their families that their representatives are working so hard to deny them critical relief. Instead of working to support hardworking students and borrowers, Republicans in Congress would rather give trillions of dol-

By **MIGUEL CARDONA**

Special to the Saipan Tribune

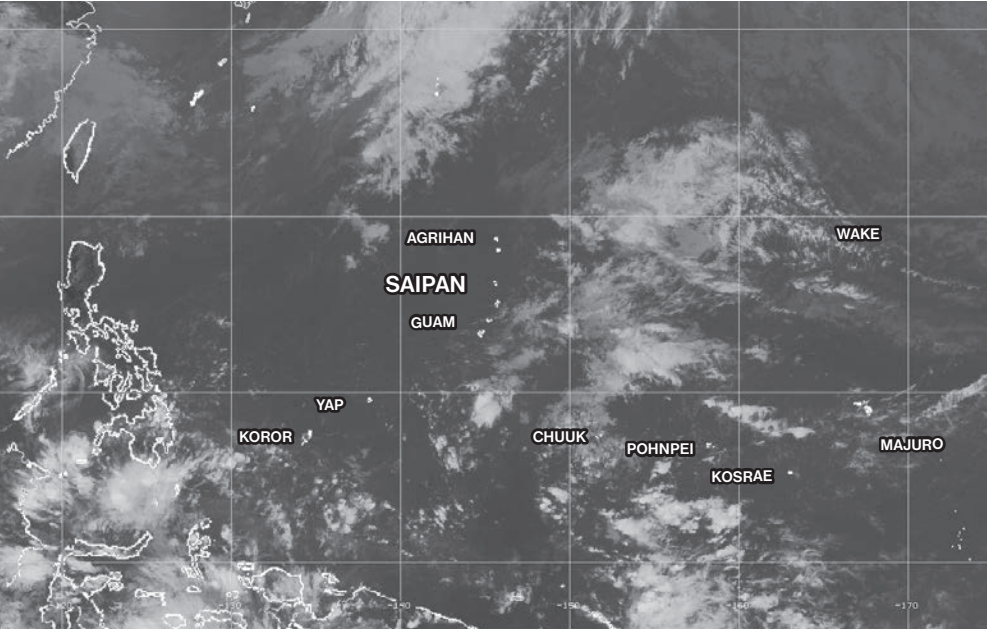
Miguel Cardona is the secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.



lars in tax breaks to the super wealthy and the biggest corporations. The Biden-Harris Administration will continue to fight to deliver much-needed support to borrowers trying to get back on their feet after the economic crisis caused by the pandemic. (PR)

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN									
TODAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY		SUNDAY	
Isolated showers. Partly sunny		Isolated showers. Mostly sunny		Partly sunny		Mostly sunny		Mostly sunny	
84°	77°	84°	77°	84°	77°	84°	77°	84°	77°
YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE									



PICTURE TIME: 7:37 AM, TUESDAY, MARCH 27, 2023

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Guam Doppler weather radar shows scattered showers east of Guam and Rota gradually moving west. The buoys reveal combined seas of 7 to 9 feet composed mainly of trade-wind swell from just north of east.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA			▲▼°F
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	85° / 76°	
Palau	Partly Cloudy	86° / 77°	
Yap	Partly Cloudy	85° / 80°	
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	86° / 80°	
Pohnpei	Partly Cloudy	85° / 77°	
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	85° / 77°	
Majuro	Thunderstorms	87° / 81°	

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:15 AM	6:28 PM
Thursday	6:14 AM	6:29 PM
Friday	6:13 AM	6:29 PM
Saturday	6:12 AM	6:29 PM
Sunday	6:12 AM	6:29 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	12:36 AM	11:54 AM
Thursday	-	1:27 AM	12:47 PM
Friday	-	2:15 AM	1:40 PM
Saturday	-	3:00 AM	2:31 PM
Sunday	-	3:40 AM	3:21 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE			▲▼°F
Auckland	Sunny	63° / 49°	
Beijing	Sunny	78° / 45°	
Hong Kong	Cloudy	71° / 68°	
Honolulu	Showers	82° / 72°	
London	Mostly Sunny	39° / 36°	
Los Angeles	Sunny	71° / 52°	
Manila	Partly Cloudy	93° / 77°	
Melbourne	Thunderstorms	79° / 57°	
Miami	Showers	78° / 74°	
New York	Mostly Cloudy	53° / 38°	
Osaka	Mostly Sunny	65° / 42°	
Paris	Cloudy	71° / 55°	
Busan	Partly Cloudy	63° / 48°	
Rome	Showers	55° / 37°	
Salem	Partly Cloudy	70° / 54°	
San Francisco	Rain/Wind	53° / 47°	
Seoul	Partly Cloudy	67° / 37°	
Tokyo	Partly Cloudy	61° / 49°	
Washington, DC	Mostly Cloudy	56° / 41°	

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY			FEET
3:14 AM	High Tide	1.52	
8:04 AM	Low Tide	1.28	
11:55 AM	High Tide	1.45	
8:10 PM	Low Tide	0.13	

DEPARTURES				ARRIVALS			
SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)				GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN			
UA117	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily	UA174	8:00AM	8:46AM	Daily
SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)				NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN			
UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5	UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7
GUAM-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-GUAM			
PR 111	5:30AM	7:25AM	Daily	PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA193	7:55PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau	UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7
UA183	8:00PM	9:50PM	Daily	UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
				UA189	12:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN			
UA117/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam	UA189/174	12:40AM	8:46AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
UA117/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau	UA184/174	10:55PM	8:46AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via Guam
				UA192/174	10:40PM	8:46AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)				INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN			
TW308	3:15AM	6:55AM	1, 4, 5, 7	7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW9308	3:50AM	7:20AM	4, 7	TW307	8:45PM	2:15AM+1	3, 4, 6, 7
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily	TW9307	9:20PM	2:50AM+1	3, 6

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. (The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

MARIANAS SOUTHERN AIRWAYS					
INITIAL DAILY FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF MARCH 6, 2023					
SAIPAN TO TINIAN			TINIAN TO SAIPAN		
DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
11:20 A.M.	11:38 A.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	12:00 P.M.	12:18 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
3:40 P.M.	3:58 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	4:20 P.M.	4:38 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
9:40 A.M.	9:58 A.M.	6,7	10:20 A.M.	10:38 A.M.	6,7
SAIPAN TO ROTA			ROTA TO SAIPAN		
DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
7:20 A.M.	8:00 A.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	10:20 A.M.	11:00 A.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
5:00 P.M.	5:40 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	6:00 P.M.	6:40 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
7:40 A.M.	8:20 A.M.	6,7	8:40 A.M.	9:20 A.M.	6,7
3:00 P.M.	3:40 P.M.	6,7	4:00 P.M.	4:40 P.M.	6,7
SAIPAN TO GUAM			GUAM TO SAIPAN		
DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
12:00 P.M.	1:00 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1:30 P.M.	2:30 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
2:00 P.M.	3:00 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	5:30 P.M.	6:30 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
7:00 P.M.	8:00 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	9:00 P.M.	10:00 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
11:00 A.M.	12:00 P.M.	6,7	12:30 P.M.	1:30 P.M.	6,7
5:00 P.M.	6:00 P.M.	6,7	6:30 P.M.	7:30 P.M.	6,7
ROTA TO GUAM			GUAM TO ROTA		
DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
8:20 A.M.	8:55 A.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	9:25 A.M.	10:00 A.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
4:25 P.M.	5:00 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	3:30 P.M.	4:05 P.M.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7)					

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.			
FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JUNE 1, 2022			
SAIPAN TO ROTA			
FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30	9:00	Daily
1302	11:00	11:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
1302	12:00	12:30	Tues/Thurs/Sat/Sun
1303	15:30	16:00	Daily
ROTA TO SAIPAN			
FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	13:00	13:30	Tues/Thurs/Sat/Sun
3102	14:00	14:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
3103	16:30	17:00	Daily
SAIPAN TO TINIAN			
FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily
TINIAN TO SAIPAN			
FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Daily

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Business

Digital nomads urged to take advantage of NMI's rebate system

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

If Burger, Comer, Mallari LLC managing partner Dave Burger had his way, he would like the CNMI to try and attract more digital nomads to come to the islands.

According to the internet, a digital nomad is a person who earns a living working online in various locations of their choosing. This is in contrast to working on a fixed business location.

Burger, who was the guest speaker during the Saipan Chamber of Commerce's Sippin' and Taxes, Tax Trivia Night mixer last week, said the CNMI can be an attractive destination for these so-called digital nomads.

"We've always had what we have here—great weather, low crime, and friendly people. We've always had that and a good tax system with credits as the U.S. tax system has great benefits which is the U.S. rebate," he said.

Another advantage the CNMI has compared to other locations is the low-maintenance lifestyle it affords.

"If your job is on the laptop, why not be here and enjoy the tax rebate. There's also not many places to go and spend your money here. So you don't have to be shopping in Rodeo Drive or going to the mall every weekend. You just live a nice quiet life with friends and family," he added.

Burger also wants the CNMI law on retirement

taxes changed.

"We need the law changed so the retirees can get their retirement income and have it sourced here. It's not CNMI sourced now. It's outside. I want it to be inside."

He said he sought the help of Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP) a couple of times but it needs more lobbying in the U.S. Congress.

"I did pursue it. I mean, I wrote a letter to Kilili a few years ago. He turned it over to his chief of staff and they got back to me and they said they loved the idea but it really does take somebody to walk it through the U.S. Congress."

Burger also said he liked the idea behind the Sippin' and Taxes, Tax Trivia Night mixer.

"I think it was a good event. Do some networking. Meet some people you might come across every day you know, just keep it lighthearted and enjoy maybe even a little bit about taxes."

Chamber president Joe C. Guerrero thanked all who attended the Sippin' and Taxes, Tax Trivia Night mixer and promised it would definitely not be the last.

"So it's the first of our quarterly mixers for 2023 and we plan to do one every quarter. The first one is here and I offered Naked Fish as the sponsor. It's a paid event, but it's a chance for Chamber members to come together in a casual environment, meet new people and network with other businesses and also be informed."

He said the Chamber de-

cided on a tax theme for the first quarter because April is tax season.

"I'm so glad that Dave from BCM volunteered to help me with some questions for our little tax trivia game to make it fun. He also spent a few minutes talking about some tax updates, nothing too boring, but you know, just informative but a chance again for people to mingle and meet with each other outside of the office," he said.

Guerrero added that the quarterly mixers have been on the pipeline since 2021.

"We have planned this, but we kept delaying it. And then last year, it just didn't work out. We were just too busy trying to restart the Chamber. And since COVID-19 is becoming behind us a little bit, we want to engage our members and the community as well. So, expect a lot more of these kinds of events this year," he said.

One of the attendees was Manhita Marianas director Eva Aguon Cruz and she had a blast.

"I don't have a strong background when it comes to taxes but my teammate made it fun! Financial literacy is a must for aspiring entrepreneurs and even those in the nonprofit sectors, and taxes are an important part of that," she said.

Joeten Motors Co.'s Ernie Henson said the mixer was a great way to relax and at the same time learn a thing or two about the local tax system.

"It gave us additional



MARK RABAGO

Burger, Comer, Mallari LLC managing partner Dave Burger was the guest speaker of Saipan Chamber of Commerce's Sippin' and Taxes, Tax Trivia Night mixer last week.

knowledge and the trivia game made us review what we learned before," said Henson, whose team actu-

ally won the trivia game.

BMC's Elijah Raphael Cabauatan also said he had a great time taking

part in the mixer.

"It was my first time to join a tax-related event and we all had fun," he said.

Biden's moves on Alaska drilling, TikTok test young voters

TEMPE, Ariz. (AP)—Recent moves by President Joe Biden to pressure TikTok over its Chinese ownership and approve oil drilling in an untapped area of Alaska are testing the loyalty of young voters, a group that's largely been in his corner.

Youth turnout surged in the three elections since Donald Trump was elected president in 2016, helping Biden eke out victories in swing states in 2020, pick up a Democratic Senate seat in the 2022 election and stem potential losses in the House.

But the 80-year-old president has never been the favorite candidate of young liberals itching for a new generation of American leadership. As Biden gears up for an expected reelection campaign, a potential TikTok ban and the Alaska drilling could weigh him down.

Meanwhile, his plan to wipe out billions of dollars in stu-

dent loan debt is in jeopardy at the Supreme Court. The effort, announced shortly before last year's midterms, was an attempt by Biden to keep a promise he made after defeating progressive Sen. Bernie Sanders in the Democratic primary campaign in 2020.

The risk for Biden is less that young left-of-center voters will vote Republican and more that they would sit out an uninspiring election altogether.

"I'm a Democrat, but I'm not voting for Biden," said Mark Buehlmann, a 20-year-old Arizona State University student who said he likely would abstain if Biden is the Democratic nominee, as expected. "He's maybe capable of doing a good job, but he's not capable of gathering the troops, rallying the people. Especially the Democratic voter base. I don't think he's a strong candidate."

TikTok allows users, 150 million of whom are in the

United States, to post short, creative videos for friends and strangers. Its algorithm has an uncanny ability to figure out what interests its users and serve up videos they'll enjoy. It's become a supremely popular—some say addictive—place for young people to find entertainment and community.

Western governments are growing increasingly worried that TikTok's owner, Beijing-based ByteDance, might give browsing history or other data about users to China's government or promote propaganda and disinformation. The U.S. and other nations have banned TikTok from government-owned devices, as have several states.

The U.S. Committee on Foreign Investment, part of Biden's Treasury Department, has threatened to ban TikTok if ByteDance doesn't sell its stake in the app, according to a Wall Street Journal report this month.

Black, Hispanic investors struggle with faith in crypto

NEW YORK (AP)—A software developer twice invested his savings in cryptocurrencies, only to lose it all. But he still promotes it to the Black community and would like to get back in himself.

A recent college graduate and a single mom are dabbling hopefully in bitcoin after attending a crypto workshop sponsored by rapper Jay-Z at the public housing complex where the hip-hop star grew up.

But a former executive at a cryptocurrency exchange feels disillusioned by the false promise of crypto helping her family in Ethiopia's war-torn Tigray region.

All were drawn by the idea of crypto as a pathway to wealth-building outside of traditional financial systems with a long history of racial discrimination and indifference to the needs of low-income communities. But

crypto's meltdown over the past year has dealt a blow to that narrative, fueling a debate between those who continue to believe in its future and skeptics who say misleading advertising and celebrity-fueled hype have drawn vulnerable people to a risky and unproven asset class.

The collapse of two crypto-friendly banks this month, Silvergate Capital Corp. and Signature Bank, complicates the picture. Their failure was a setback for crypto companies that relied on the banks to convert digital currencies to U.S. dollars. Yet the crisis bolstered Bitcoin, the oldest and most popular digital currency, by reinforcing a distrust in the banking system that helped give rise to cryptocurrencies in the first place.

Mariela Regalado, 33, and Jimmy Barrio, 22, neighbors at the Marcy Houses complex in Brooklyn, started putting \$20

or \$30 into bitcoin every two weeks or so after attending "Bitcoin Academy," a workshop sponsored last summer by Jay-Z and Jack Dorsey, co-founder of Block Inc., the parent company of mobile payment system Cash App.

"I don't see it as something that's going to, you know, take me out of Brooklyn and buy me a \$2 million mansion in Texas," said Regalado, an educational consultant and mother of a toddler. "But if it happens, I'm all for it."

Only a small minority of the U.S. population owns cryptocurrency, but adoption increased during the COVID-19 pandemic as low interest rates made borrowing money and investing in risky assets more attractive. Prices peaked in 2021, and a constellation of apps, exchanges and even ATM-like crypto machines made buying digital coins easy.

Nation

Nashville shooter was ex-student with detailed plan to kill

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP)—The former student who shot through the doors of a Christian elementary school in Nashville and killed three children and three adults had drawn a detailed map of the school, including potential entry points, and conducted surveillance of the building before carrying out the massacre.

Metropolitan Nashville Police Chief John Drake did not say exactly what drove the shooter to open fire Monday morning at The Covenant School before being killed by police. But he provided chilling examples of the shooter's elaborate planning for the targeted attack, the latest in a series of mass shootings in a country that has grown increasingly unnerved by bloodshed in schools.

"We have a manifesto, we have some writings that we're going over that pertain to this date, the actual incident," he told reporters. "We have a map drawn out of how this was all

going to take place."

He said in an interview with NBC News that investigators believe the shooter had "some resentment for having to go to that school."

The victims included three 9-year-old children, the school's top administrator, a substitute teacher and a custodian. Amid the chaos a familiar ritual played out: Panicked parents rushed to the school to see if their children were safe and tearfully hugged their kids, and a stunned community held vigils for the victims.

Rachel Dibble, who was at a nearby church where children were taken to be reunited with their parents, described the scene as everyone being in "complete shock."

"People were involuntarily trembling," she said. "The children ... started their morning in their cute little uniforms, they probably had some Froot Loops and now their whole lives changed today."

Police gave unclear infor-

High tornado death toll in Mississippi like losing family

ROLLING FORK, Miss. (AP)—Lonnie and Melissa Pierce lived a quiet, peaceful life in the Mississippi Delta before a powerful tornado swept up a neighbor's semi-truck and dropped it onto their brick home like a bomb, killing the married couple.

A retired welder, Lonnie Pierce was fond of hunting and bass fishing, friends and neighbors said. Melissa Pierce volunteered for a local Christian charity that operates a small thrift store.

"They were good. About the best, I can tell you that," said neighbor Harvey Cockrell, 76, a fellow welder who worked with Lonnie Pierce for decades.

A mound of broken rubble was all that remained of the couple's home after a devastating twister packing winds of up to 200 mph (320 kph) tore through the rural town of Rolling Fork late Friday. The 18-wheeler that had been parked next door before the storm hit remained perched atop the debris Monday, and deer antlers that had been among Lonnie Pierce's hunting trophies covered the couple's yard.

At least 21 people in Mississippi and a man in Alabama perished as menacing storms trekked across the Deep South over the weekend. The toll was especially steep in Sharkey County, in western Mississippi, where the Pierces were among 13 people who died in a county of 4,200 residents.

"I had to identify family, that's what it felt like," said Sharkey County Coroner Angelia Eason. "We're a close-knit community; we're small. And when something like this happens, we tend to come together even closer. We didn't just lose 13 people, we lost 13 family members."

The others Eason identified as having died in the storm included a woman and her elderly mother, as well as a man from Yazoo City, who had traveled more than 30 miles (48 kilometers) west to Rolling Fork for an auction.

April Johnson was working at her job as a discount store cashier in Rolling Fork when the storm struck and destroyed the business. The mother of five children was also among those the coroner confirmed had lost their lives.

"She was a hardworking, loving kind who would go out of her way to help people," said Dianne Berry, a cousin to Johnson's mother. "She always had a smile."

Berry said Johnson's son played football, and Johnson was always willing to drive other children to games and practices. "She would fix them little snack bags," Berry said.

Once the storm passed, Jermain Wells, a neighbor of the Pierces, went door-to-door searching for survivors in need. When he got to the wreckage of the couple's home, there was nothing he could do.



A woman kisses a child at the reunification center at the Woodmont Baptist church after a school shooting, Monday, March 27, 2023, in Nashville, Tenn.

mation on the gender of the shooter. For hours, police identified the shooter as a 28-year-old woman and eventually identified the person as Audrey Elizabeth Hale. Then at a late afternoon press conference, the police chief said that Hale was transgender. After the news conference, police spokesperson Don Aaron declined to elaborate on how Hale currently identified.

Authorities said Hale was armed with two "assault-style" weapons as well as a handgun. At least two of them were believed to have been obtained legally in the Nashville area, according to the chief. Police said a search of Hale's home turned up a sawed-off shotgun, a sec-

ond shotgun and other unspecified evidence.

The victims were identified as Evelyn Dieckhaus, Hallie Scruggs, and William Kinney, all 9 years old, and adults Cynthia Peak, 61; Katherine Koonce, 60; and Mike Hill, 61.

The website of The Covenant School, a Presbyterian school founded in 2001, lists a Katherine Koonce as the head of the school. Her LinkedIn profile says she has led the school since July 2016. Peak was a substitute teacher and Hill was a custodian, according to investigators.

Founded as a ministry of Covenant Presbyterian Church, The Covenant School is located in the affluent Green Hills neighborhood just south

of downtown Nashville that is home to the famed Bluebird Café — a spot typically beloved by musicians and songwriters.

The school has about 200 students from preschool through sixth grade, as well as roughly 50 staff members.

"Our community is heartbroken," a statement from the school said. "We are grieving tremendous loss and are in shock coming out of the terror that shattered our school and church. We are focused on loving our students, our families, our faculty and staff and beginning the process of healing."

Before Monday's violence in Nashville, there had been seven mass killings at K-12 schools since 2006 in which four or

Handmade blankets welcome refugees, immigrants to US

BURLINGTON, Vt. (AP)—"Welcome to the USA," says a note attached to a hand-crocheted blanket of purple, white and gray stripes.

Hollie Shaner-McRae, of Burlington, who made the blanket as a gift for a refugee, wrote of her great grandparents coming to the United States from Ukraine, Russia and Poland.

One great grandfather was a tailor and the other was a barrel maker, she wrote. "Both were so brave and came to America as teenagers," she wrote in the note. "I hope you make friends and feel safe here," Shaner-McRae wrote to whomever would receive the blanket. "Vermont is blessed to have new families arrive and enrich our world."

The quilt was one of at least 86 artistic blankets that crafters sewed, crocheted and knitted as gifts for refugees and immigrants to make them feel welcomed in their new community in Vermont. The handmade creations were on

display at the Heritage Mill Museum in Winooski, Vermont, before they were given away to refugees last week.

The effort is part of the national Welcome Blanket project, which describes itself as a crowd-sourced artistic action supporting refugees settling in the U.S. Los Angeles activist Jayna Zweiman started Welcome Blanket in 2017 in opposition to Donald Trump's candidacy speeches about building a wall between the United States and Mexico.

As a grandchild of refugees, she grew up with family stories of her grandfather seeing the Statue of Liberty. That monument decades later still made him feel welcomed, she said.

Just as the Statue of Liberty was seen as an inviting symbol for immigrants in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Zweiman thought at the time: "What can we do in the 21st century as people are coming through these different ports to welcome them?"

To date, thousands of blankets and notes have been created around the country for exhibits including in Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles and Winooski, Vermont. The blankets, accompanied with the personal notes from their creators, were then gifted to refugees at events, in welcome boxes, at their new housing or through charity groups.

The project is geared toward refugees—people forced to leave their home or country to escape war, persecution or natural disaster—including Ukrainians who escaped the Russian invasion of their home country. But the blankets have also gone to immigrants.

In Vermont, Aisha Bitini, who is originally from Congo, that she loves the blanket she chose—a soft, crocheted piece made up of large squares of gold, maroon, off-white and gray.

"I'm so blessed to have one of them," she said, draping it over her shoulder. She picked it out at the blanket giveaway

more people were killed within a 24-hour period, according to a database maintained by The Associated Press and USA Today in partnership with Northeastern University. In all of them, the shooters were males.

The database does not include school shootings in which fewer than four people were killed, which have become far more common in recent years. Just last week alone, for example, school shootings happened in Denver and the Dallas-area within two days of each other.

Monday's tragedy unfolded over roughly 14 minutes. Police received the initial call about an active shooter at 10:13 a.m.

Officers began clearing the first story of the school when they heard gunshots coming from the second level, Aaron said. Police later said the shooter fired at arriving officers from a second-story window and had come armed with significant ammunition.

Two officers from a five-member team opened fire in response, killing the suspect at 10:27 a.m., Aaron said.

Late Monday night, police released approximately two minutes of edited surveillance video showing the shooter's car driving up to the school from multiple angles, including one in which children can be seen playing on swings in the background. Next an interior view shows glass doors to the school being shot out and the shooter ducking through one of the shattered doors.

held last week at the Association of Africans Living in Vermont, or AALV.

The note that came with the blanket "feels so special," Bitini said, adding that she thanks the person who made "this beautiful blanket" and that she will "cherish it forever."

Kalyan Adhikari, who's originally from Nepal, said the Vermont project was "such a kind and warm initiative." He said it makes refugees feel welcome and little bit more like they're home.

"This makes my heart warm. I can't thank them enough," he said of the blanket-makers.

The immigrant-refugee story resonated with Sonia Savoulian, of Los Angeles, when in 2017 then-President Donald Trump imposed a ban on travelers from certain majority-Muslim countries. Her ancestry is Armenian, and her family includes refugees and immigrants. She herself is an immigrant—and she also happens to make things with yarn.

Asia

Kim wants N. Korea to make more nuke material for bombs



This photo provided on Tuesday, March 28, 2023, by the North Korean government, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, rear, visits a hall displayed what appeared to be various types of warheads designed to be mounted on missiles or rocket launchers on March 27, 2023, in undisclosed location, North Korea.

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has called for his nuclear scientists to increase production of weapons-grade material to make bombs to put on his increasing range of weapons.

The report in state media Tuesday followed a series of missile launches—seven launch events in this month alone—and rising threats to use the weapons against his enemies. North Korea's weapons tests and U.S.-South Korea military exercises have intensified in a tit-for-tat cycle, underscoring heightened tensions in the region.

Officials say North Korea could further up the ante in coming weeks or months with more provocative displays of its military nuclear program, possibly including its first test detonation of a nuclear device since September 2017.

The Korean Central News Agency said Kim during a meeting on Monday with officials and scientists at a state nuclear weapons institute stressed the need to ramp up bomb fuel production to meet his goals to expand his nuclear arsenal “exponentially,” and issued unspecified “important tasks” for his nuclear industry.

Kim also examined the country's established plans for nuclear counterattacks as scientists briefed him on the North's latest nuclear-capable weapons systems and progress in technologies for mounting nuclear warheads on missiles, the agency said.

The agency's photos showed Kim talking with officials inside a hall that displayed what appeared to be various types of warheads, including around 10 khaki-green capsules with red tips. Other weapons included devices that looked like a black-and-white cone with fins or a large torpedo.

ASIAN BRIEFS

India expels Rahul Gandhi, Modi critic, from Parliament

NEW DELHI (AP)—India's top opposition leader and fierce critic of Prime Minister Narendra Modi was expelled from Parliament Friday, a day after a court convicted him of defamation and sentenced him to two years in prison for mocking the surname Modi in an election speech. The actions against Rahul Gandhi, the great-grandson of India's first prime minister, were widely condemned by opponents of Modi as the latest assaults against democracy and free speech by a ruling government seeking to crush dissent. Removing Gandhi from politics delivered a major blow to the opposition party he led ahead of next year's national elections. A local court from Modi's home state of Gujarat convicted Gandhi on Thursday for a 2019 speech in which he asked, “Why do all thieves have Modi as their surname?” Gandhi then referred to three well-known and unrelated Modis in the speech: a fugitive Indian diamond tycoon, a

cricket executive banned from the Indian Premier League tournament and the prime minister. Under Indian law, a criminal conviction and prison sentence of two years or more are grounds for expulsion from Parliament, but Gandhi is out on bail for 30 days and plans to appeal. Opposition lawmakers rallied to his defense on Friday, calling his expulsion a new low for India's constitutional democracy. Modi's critics say India's democracy—the world's largest with nearly 1.4 billion people—has been in retreat since he first came to power in 2014. They accuse his populist government of preoccupied itself with pursuing a Hindu nationalist agenda, a charge his administration has denied. “I am fighting for the voice of this country. I am ready to pay any price,” Gandhi, 52, wrote on Twitter.

Indonesia's stance on Israel overshadows world soccer event

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP)—Uncertainty over the timing and location of the Under-20 World

Cup continues two days after Indonesian authorities postponed the official draw for the May 20-June 11 tournament because of protests over Israel's participation. The draw, scheduled to held in Bali on Friday, was delayed indefinitely by Indonesia's soccer federation amid backlash from conservative Islamic groups. Doubt had already been cast on the draw ceremony when the governor of Bali, Wayan Koster, called for a ban on Israel playing there because of Indonesia's diplomatic support for the Palestinian cause. FIFA, the sport's world governing body, has not commented on Indonesia's status as host or a reported offer from Argentina to stage the event. Pressure is mounting on Indonesia's soccer association, the PSSI, and its chairman Erick Thohir, who was planning a trip to Zurich to hold further meetings with FIFA. If local authorities fail to resolve the hosting issues over Israel, Indonesia risks being suspended by FIFA and potentially missing out on Asian qualifying for the 2026 World Cup.

World

Anti-government protests in Kenya hit Nairobi again

Nairobi, Kenya (AP)—Thousands of anti-government protesters marched on the streets of Kenya's capital, Nairobi, on Monday despite the government's declaration that the protests are illegal.

Opposition leader Raila Odinga joined protesters on the western side of the capital where his convoy attracted thousands of supporters and he addressed them at various stops calling for electoral justice and reduced prices for food items.

Police used a water cannon and teargas to disperse supporters. Police chief Japheth Koome insists that the protests are illegal but Odinga says Kenyans have a right to demonstrate.

Odinga and his party, Azimio la Umoja—One Kenya Coalition, are leading the protests against the rising cost of living and calling for President William Ruto's resignation saying he wasn't validly elected in last year's election.

The protests occurred last week and Odinga has urged

his followers to take to the streets twice a week, on Mondays and Thursdays.

More than a dozen civil society groups have in a joint statement expressed concern over police declaring Monday's protests illegal and urged authorities to uphold people's constitutional right to peaceful demonstrations.

Ruto over the weekend urged Odinga to face him directly and “stop terrorizing the country.”

Odinga's plan in last week's protests was to march to the president's offices at State House but police erected barriers to prevent public access and motorists were directed to alternative routes.

Ruto is currently out of the country visiting Germany.

Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua shared photos of himself at his office early Monday morning and urged Kenyans to report to work.

Nairobi's central business district remained calm but most businesses were closed on Monday morning due to

the uncertainty over demonstrations and if there would be violence.

There were reports of some violence directed at Odinga and his supporters. Some people raided a farm in the outskirts of the capital owned by the family of the former president Uhuru Kenyatta, cutting trees and taking away sheep, according to local media reports. The former president supported Odinga in 2022 elections.

Odinga's gas cylinder manufacturing business near the central business district was pelted with stones.

There was a heavy police presence within the capital and surrounding neighborhoods on Monday. Police have dispersed crowds that gathered in Kibera and Mathare, poor areas of Nairobi.

A resident on Kibera, Emily Atieno, told the Associated Press she would continue to protest until the “price of cooking flour is reduced”. Another protester Mario Omari said protests would continue until Ruto resigns from office.

Russia says it test-fired anti-ship missiles in Sea of Japan

MOSCOW (AP)—Russia's Defense Ministry says Moscow has test-fired anti-ship missiles in the Sea of Japan.

The ministry said Tuesday that two boats launched a simulated missile attack on a mock enemy warship about 100 kilometers (60 miles) away. The ministry said the target was successfully hit by two Moskit cruise missiles.

The Moskit, whose NATO reporting name is the SS-N-22 Sunburn, is a supersonic anti-ship cruise missile that has conventional and nuclear warhead capacity.

It said the exercise took place in the Peter the Great Gulf in the Sea of Japan but did not give more precise coordinates. The gulf borders the Russian Pacific Fleet headquarters at Fokino and is about 700 kilometers (430 miles) from Japan's northern Hokkaido Island.

BUCHAREST, Romania

(AP)—European Council President Charles Michel on Monday pledged to continue supporting Ukraine against Russian aggression “for as long as necessary,” adding that EU leaders will “massively ramp up” ammunition production to send to the war-torn country.

Michel met with Romanian President Klaus Iohannis at Cotroceni Palace in Bucharest, where the two leaders discussed EU support for Ukraine, security issues in neighboring Moldova, and Romania's bid to join Europe's ID check-free travel zone, also known as the Schengen area.

“We are again stepping up our military support,” Michel told a news conference. “Last week, we agreed to urgently deliver one million rounds of ammunition to Ukraine. We will massively ramp up our production capacity.”

Last week, EU foreign and defense ministers approved a plan for a fast-track purchasing procedure for direct negotiations with industrial providers of ammunition in Europe, and plan to send one million rounds to Ukraine within the next 12 months. But not all EU members want to partake in getting ammunition to Ukraine.

President Iohannis said “this is not the time for hesitation in maintaining unity and solidarity with Ukraine” as the war grinds on, adding that “support must be maintained and strengthened on all levels.”

The two leaders also dis-

cussed the unfolding situation in EU-membership candidate Moldova that has faced a protracted series of crises since Moscow launched its war in neighboring Ukraine.

Michel said Russia and its allies have stepped up efforts to destabilize Moldova by “weaponizing energy, conducting cyber-attacks, staging protests, and other subversive activities.”

■ ■ ■ ■ ■
The U.S. Navy's 7th Fleet did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Japan does not plan to lodge a protest to Russia over the missile exercise, said Tasuku Matsuki, Japanese Foreign Ministry official in charge of Russia, noting that its location — Peter the Great Bay — is considered Russian coast, though it is facing the water between the two countries.

“On the whole, Japan is concerned about Russia's increasing military activities around the Japanese coasts and watching them with great interest,” Matsuki said.

He said Russia has conducted missile drills in that area in the past and issued maritime advisories ahead of time. He said Japan is not in a position to comment on Russia's intention of the exercise.

Good Housekeeping

Hopping into spring decorating

By KATIE LAUGHRIDGE
Tribune News Service

HANDOUT/TNS

This tablescape takes a less expected approach with pops of citrus tones that pair perfectly with blue and white.



HANDOUT/TNS

Sprucing up your space with bunnies and florals is a whimsical way to create a fun and fresh springtime atmosphere in any room.



HANDOUT/TNS

In this display, tulips, hydrangeas and drooping floral stems are the monochromatic base from which tropical greenery bursts. Monstera leaves and spiky palm fronds are mixed throughout, providing visual interest on all sides of the piece.



HANDOUT/TNS

Once you find a bunny (or two) you love, it's time to display it! If you are looking to create a sweet Easter or spring vignette with your bunny as the shining star, start by placing a large bunny in the center and add smaller items around it, such as candles, vases of flowers or even decorative eggs.



HANDOUT/TNS

At this table, ginger jars, statement bunnies and greenery fill the center of the table, with bunny dishes nestled among them.

With the arrival of spring comes a renewed sense of energy and joy, and what better way to celebrate the season than by incorporating playful and charming seasonal touches into your home decor? For me, spring decor brings the arrival of fresh florals and of course, bushels of bunnies. 2023 is the Year of the Rabbit after all, according to the Chinese zodiac, making it an especially auspicious time to add the adorable creatures to your interior design.

Sprucing up your space with bunnies and florals is a whimsical way to create a fun and fresh springtime atmosphere in any room. Endless possibilities exist for incorporating them into your decor, from figurines and wall art to textiles and dinnerware. Here are some creative and stylish ways to bring a touch of springtime charm to your home.

There's a bunny for every style

Although the origins of the Easter bunny are somewhat shrouded in mystery, one theory is the symbol of the rabbit stems from the festival of Eostre, a pagan tradition celebrating a goddess of fertility whose animal symbol was a bunny (please forgive this religious studies minor as she geeks out just a "hare").

Wherever they come from originally, bunnies as decor are available in all forms. In varying sizes, they range from elegant white ceramic, to detailed and delicate bronze, to whimsical and wooden. No matter your personal style, I truly believe there is a bunny to match—which leads me to my next point.

Don't fall into the trap of thinking anything will do for spring decor. Take your time and find pieces that truly reso-

nate with you and that you will love to use year after year. Those bunnies and eggs that you display will look a lot more natural and "at home" in your space if they stick with the style to which you ordinarily gravitate.

Once you find a bunny (or two) you love, it's time to display it! If you are looking to create a sweet Easter or spring vignette with your bunny as the shining star, start by placing a large bunny in the center and add smaller items around it, such as candles, vases of flowers or even decorative eggs. You can also use bunny-shaped objects, such as ceramic bowls or candle holders, to add a playful touch to your display.

Make bunnies the center of your table

Spring can bring a dizzying array of get-togethers, and the table is a fun place to set the scene for all the festivities during the upcoming months. For an effortless springtime table, I like to keep a main centerpiece and rotate decor and each place setting around it. The centerpiece can be as simple or elaborate as you like, and you can add different elements to it as the season progresses.

At this table, ginger jars, statement bunnies and greenery fill the center of the table, with bunny dishes nestled among them. For now, little brass bunnies rest in nests of greenery at each place setting atop a stack of sweet dishes. After Easter, they might be replaced with little birds or other natural elements to round out the season.

This next tabletop proves springtime doesn't have to be all about pastels. This tablescape takes a less expected approach with pops of citrus tones that pair perfectly with our beloved blue and white. White ceramic rabbits are the perfect addition; they look absolutely at home among the fine floral dishes and blooms, and their monochromatic color keeps the arrangement from looking too busy.

On decorating for Easter and spring

One thing to keep in mind when decorating for Easter and spring in general is you don't have to go overboard with decor—a few new stems and a bunny or two can go a long way.



HANDOUT/TNS

With their simple beauty and versatility, tulips are a must-have for any spring decor.

But I know some that take this time of year as an opportunity to start fresh with their decor—literally. If you're looking to incorporate more springtime touches around the house, consider swapping out darker, heavier textiles like throws and throw pillows for lighter and brighter options, or exchanging a few pieces of art on the wall with something botanical and full of life.

Don't leave out the outdoors when it comes to refreshing for spring. Adding seasonal touches to your patio or outdoor living space is a great way to encourage use of the space as the days get longer and warmer. New outdoor furniture might be in order, or maybe a few new outdoor pillows will do.

Make an impact with tropical florals

Tulips are one of the most beloved flowers of spring, with their vibrant colors and delicate petals. These versatile flowers can be used in a variety of ways, from centerpieces and bouquets to wreaths and garlands. With their simple beauty and versatility, tulips are a must-have for any spring decor.

Incorporating bold tropical stems with delicate traditional florals is a great way to add dimension and interest to your arrangements. In this display, tulips, hydrangeas and drooping floral stems are the monochromatic base from which tropical greenery bursts. Monstera leaves and spiky palm fronds are mixed throughout, providing visual interest on all sides of the piece. The end result? Stunning bouquets that retain their refined New Traditional feel while still feeling fresh.



HANDOUT/TNS

Spring can bring a dizzying array of get-togethers, and the table is a fun place to set the scene for all the festivities during the upcoming months.

Life & Style

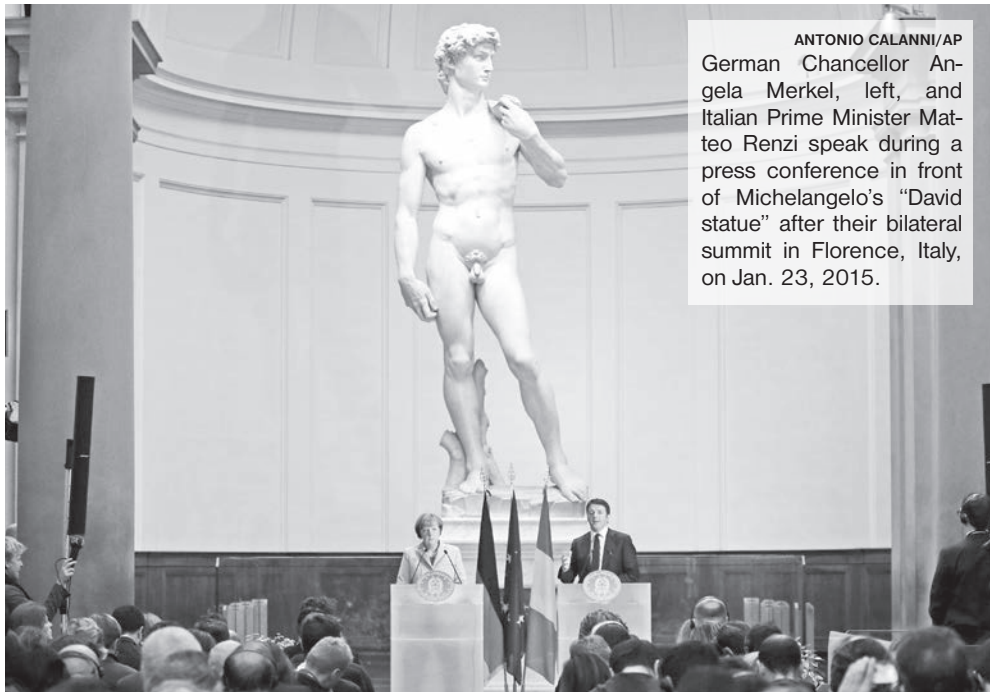
Is the David porn? Come see, Italians tell Florida parents

ROME (AP)—The Florence museum housing Michelangelo's Renaissance masterpiece the David on Sunday invited parents and students from a Florida charter school to visit after complaints about a lesson featuring the statue forced the principal to resign.

Florence Mayor Dario Nardella also tweeted an invitation for the principal to visit so he can personally honor her. Confusing art with pornography was "ridiculous," Nardella said.

The board of the Tallahassee Classical School pressured Principal Hope Carrasquilla to resign last week after an image of the David was shown to a sixth-grade art class. The school has a policy requiring parents to be notified in advance about "controversial" topics being taught.

The incredulous Italian response highlighted how the



ANTONIO CALANNI/AP
German Chancellor Angela Merkel, left, and Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi speak during a press conference in front of Michelangelo's "David statue" after their bilateral summit in Florence, Italy, on Jan. 23, 2015.

U.S. culture wars are often perceived in Europe, where despite a rise in right-wing sentiment and governance, the Renaissance and its mas-

terpieces, even its naked ones, are generally free of controversy. Sunday's front page of the Italian daily publication Corriere della Sera featured

a cartoon by its leading satirist depicting David with his genitals covered by an image of Uncle Sam and the word "Shame."

Carrasquilla believes the board targeted her after three parents complained about a lesson including a photo of the David, a 5-meter tall (17 foot) nude marble sculpture dating from 1504. The work, reflecting the height of the Italian Renaissance, depicts the Biblical David going to fight Goliath armed only with his faith in God.

Carrasquilla has said two parents complained because they weren't notified in advance that a nude would be shown, while a third called the

iconic statue pornographic.

Carrasquilla said in a phone interview Sunday that she is "very honored" by the invitations to Italy and she may accept.

"I am totally, like, wow," Carrasquilla said. "I've been to Florence before and have seen the David up close and in person, but I would love to go and be a guest of the mayor."

Cecilie Hollberg, director of the Galleria dell'Accademia, where the David resides, expressed astonishment at the controversy.

Louvre staff block entrances as part of pension protest

PARIS (AP)—The Louvre Museum in Paris was closed to the public on Monday when its workers took part in the wave of French protest strikes against the government's unpopular pension reform plans.

Dozens of Louvre employees blocked the entrance, prompting the museum to announce it would be temporarily closed.

The demonstrators toted banners and flags in front of the Louvre's famed pyramid, where President Emmanuel Macron had celebrated his presidential victory in 2017. They demanded the repeal of the new pension law that raises the retirement age from 62 to 64.

The showbusiness, broadcasting and culture branch of the CGT union tweeted an image of the Mona Lisa with an aged and wrinkled face, with the words: "64 it's a No!"

The action comes on the eve of another nationwide protest planned for Tuesday against the bill—and as Macron holds a meeting with Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne to discuss the way forward. The Louvre is always closed on Tuesdays, so staff protested a day earlier.

Some tourists were stoic about the artistic blockade.

"If you firmly believe that this will bring some change, there's plenty of other things that we can see in Paris," said Britney Tate, a 29-year-old doctoral student from California.

Others who had traveled thousands of miles were more vocal about the inconvenience.

"We're going to respect their strike tomorrow, but to do this today, it's just heartbreaking," said Karma Carden, a tourist from Fort Myers, Florida. "We knew that Versailles would not be open because of the protest, but we knew the Louvre was open."

Wisconsin school bans Miley, Dolly duet from class concert

MADISON, Wis. (AP)—Administrators at a Wisconsin elementary school stopped a first-grade class from performing a Miley Cyrus and Dolly Parton duet promoting LGBTQ acceptance because the song "could be perceived as controversial."

Students at Heyer Elementary School in Waukesha had prepared a rendition of "Rainbowland" for their spring concert, but school officials struck the song from the lineup last week. Parents in the district say the decision was made because the song encourages LGBTQ acceptance and references rainbows.

Superintendent James Seibert, who did not immediately return a call on Monday, confirmed to Fox6 that administrators had removed "Rainbowland" from the first-grade concert because it might not be "appropriate for the age and maturity level of the students." He also cited a school board policy against raising controversial issues in classrooms.

Seibert has previously prohibited rainbows and pride flags from being displayed in Waukesha classrooms and suspended the school district's equity and diversity work in 2021.

"Let's all dig down deep

inside, brush the judgment and fear aside," the song from Cyrus' 2017 album "Younger Now" goes. "Living in a Rainbowland, where you and I go hand in hand. Oh, I'd be lying if I said this was fine, all the hurt and the hate going on here."

First-grade teacher Melissa Tempel said she chose the song because its message seemed universal and sweet. The class concert's theme was "The World" and included other songs such as "Here Comes the Sun," by The Beatles and "What a Wonderful World," by Louis Armstrong.

"My students were just devastated. They really liked

this song and we had already begun singing it," Tempel said Monday.

Administrators also initially banned the song "Rainbow Connection" from The Muppets but later reversed that decision, according to Tempel.

Parents have been angered by the song's removal, Tempel said. But she was more concerned about what the ban and other district policies against expressing LGBTQ support meant for students.

"These confusing messages about rainbows are ultimately creating a culture that seems unsafe towards queer people," she said.

Woman's frank sexual talk creates doubts for fiance

DEAR ABBY: I'm a 50-year-old man who has been divorced twice. The last one was two years and eight months ago. Last year, I met a wonderful woman, and we have been dating and building a beautiful relationship together. A month ago, I proposed to her, and she accepted.

Everything is going great, but I'm intimidated by all the men she has been with prior to us. She had a lot of toxic relationships and was sexually active with a lot of different men. When we have sex, she tells me I'm not assertive enough and she wants me to be more aggressive. It makes me feel like she isn't happy with me sexually and she will sooner or later look outside our relationship.

Am I right to feel this way? I don't want to be in a relationship that will end because of our sex life. What should I do?

FEELING INADEQUATE IN UTAH

DEAR FEELING INADEQUATE: Good sex has everything to do with open communication between the partners. Your lady friend's past isn't a problem unless you make it one. She is trying to tell you what she needs from you. If you are not clear on what that means, ask her to elaborate. If it's not to your liking, be honest, but do not advance this relationship fur-

ther until you get this worked out.

♦♦♦♦

DEAR ABBY: My daughter "Claudia" has been dating and living with "Justin"—the boy next door. They moved to Florida months back and loved each day together. Then, the unthinkable happened. Justin's father was diagnosed with a rare disease and died two weeks later. His last words to Justin were, "Take care of your mom."

Justin and Claudia immediately returned to New York. Each day has been a nightmare with his mom. She ignores Claudia and talks only to her son. Justin is 25 and hasn't lived at home for years. When she calls, she yells at him and he goes running to her. She no longer talks to us, although we had a nice relationship when her husband was alive.

Justin loves his mom, but he's torn. What can my daughter do? Justin ignores how she's being treated and the tears it has caused. It breaks my heart. We love and adore him. Please help.

HURTING FOR THEM

DEAR HURTING: Justin is going through a painful emotional period right now. If you have any influence on him, express to him that you are concerned for him AND his mother, that she may need grief counseling beyond what he can offer her, and that he might also benefit from counseling until things settle down.

DEAR ABBY BY ABIGAIL VAN BUREN UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.



A licensed mental health professional would help him deal with his mother more effectively than he's doing presently, as well as provide him with a safe place to vent. As to your daughter, tell Claudia this period probably won't last forever, so she may want to give it time. If not, she'll have to decide whether she needs to move on.

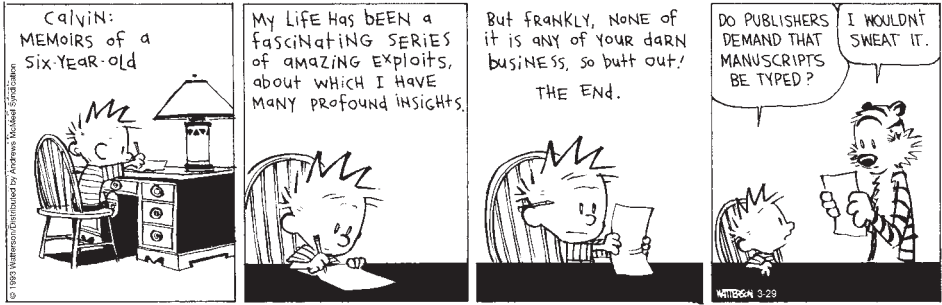
♦♦♦♦

Good advice for everyone – teens to seniors – is in "The Anger in All of Us and How to Deal With It." To order, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for \$8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Anger Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



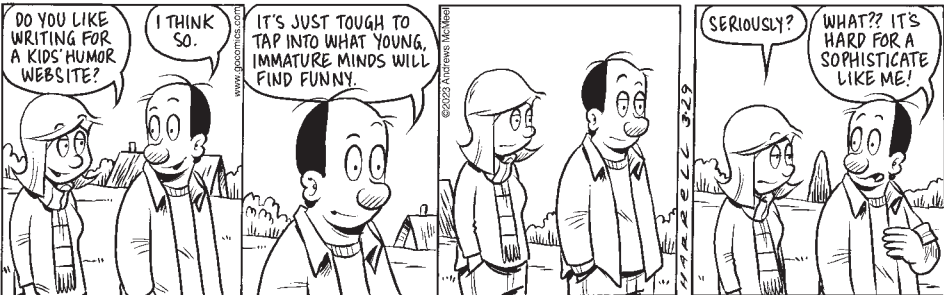
Garfield®

By Jim Davis



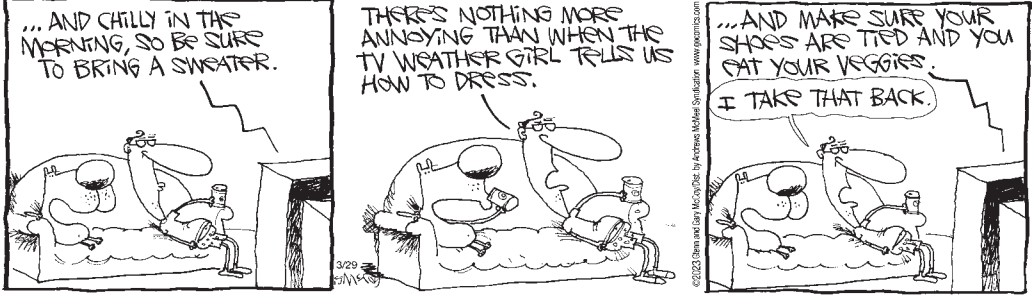
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 "Hum-bug!"

4 Cribs

8 Dazzle

12 Before

13 Opera house solo

14 Super-girl's first name

15 Istanbul honorific

16 Place in the heart

18 Seoul setting

20 Bro, maybe

21 Lady of the haus

24 Evade

28 Blog post with numbered topic items

32 Resumes

33 Play part

34 Mom's sisters

36 Airline to Sweden

37 Furnace fuel

39 Speck

41 NBC foreign correspondent

Richard

43 Enlist again

44 "Top Gun" target

46 Twelve

50 Houston news-paper

55 Acapulco gold

56 Educator

57 Custard recipe

58 "Norma —"

59 Vacation-ing

60 Try out

61 Pac. counter-part

DOWN

1 Toucan feature

2 Jason's ship

3 Get wind of

4 Nuremberg setting

5 Hot temper

6 Diarist

7 Ana's college exams

8 Winter vehicle

9 Tic- —toe

10 Web address

11 Scot's denial

17 Abolish

19 Newt

22 "Care for — of tea?"

23 Of an arm bone

25 Platter

26 Soccer score

27 Being, to Brutus

28 Lingerie trim

29 PC picture

30 Men-only

31 To be, in Paris

35 Pupil

38 Snicket of kid lit

40 Wall St. debut

42 Architect Maya

45 Present

47 Author — Neale Hurston

48 Part of Q.E.D.

49 Yuletide tune

50 Nashville awards org.

51 Hem's partner

52 Genetic letters

53 Browns, on score-boards

54 Vegas opener

Solution time: 23 mins.

Yesterdays answer 3-29

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Megan Hilty, 42; Lucy Lawless, 55; Amy Sedaris, 62; Eric Idle, 80.

Happy Birthday: Realism will play a role in how your year unfolds. View situations from a distance, and refuse to let emotions steal your thunder when practicality is required. Use your knowledge, experience and intelligence to outsmart anyone trying to disrupt your plans, ideology or cash flow. Be yourself, don't make excuses and follow through with programs geared toward what you want. Your happiness is your responsibility. Your numbers are 8, 14, 22, 29, 30, 37, 40.

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Busy yourself with tasks you can do independently. The fewer people you encounter, the easier your day will unfold. A home improvement project will give you something to take your mind off a personal situation you aren't ready to address. **

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Connect with someone you haven't talked to lately, and the information you receive will help you get ahead. A new look will boost your morale and prompt you to share your feelings. Romance is skyrocketing. ****

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): An open mind will feed your imagination with exciting alternatives regarding your direction in life. Revisit old ideas and rework plans that still excite you. A new project will give you hope for a brighter future. Stick to a budget. ***

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Keep your life simple and your emotions under control. It will be easy for a situation to explode if you or someone else overreact or be-

come too demanding. Keep your guard up but your words to yourself. Choose self-improvement over changing others. ***

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Do your own thing, follow your heart and refuse to let anyone upset your day. Stop worrying so much about what others think and pay more attention to what you want to achieve. Work alone; the results you get will be stellar. ****

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Spending money while feeling emotional will be disappointing when the bill arrives. You can appease yourself by making changes and updates that don't cost money. Consider incorporating a better exercise routine into your daily schedule. ****

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Don't sweat the small stuff. Laboring over nonsense will tire you before you get the chance to face something worthwhile. Choose your battles wisely. You'll outmaneuver anyone trying to mislead or disrupt your life. Use intelligence, not anger, to reach your objective. **

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Go over your finances, contracts and medical issues thoroughly. Make whatever adjustments are necessary to keep you in a positive mindset. A lifestyle change geared toward lowering your overhead will ease stress and give you hope. ***

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): You have the knowledge and the answers you need to improve your life. Don't depend on someone looking out for their interests and not yours. Put your emotions aside and do your own thing. A social event will escalate your plans. ***

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): De-cluttering encourages you to move or change your life. Whether you become a minimalist or choose different living arrangements, the result will help put things in perspective and allow you to distance yourself from interference. ***

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Don't waste time or money on something or someone you don't need in your life. Be transparent regarding your intentions, and stop worrying about who chooses the same path. Once you find calmness, you'll discover happiness and recognize who is beneficial. ***

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Push forward until you are satisfied with the results. How you run your home or workplace will determine your success. A youngster or someone you look out for will cause emotional stress if you are too accommodating. Set boundaries. 5 stars

Birthday Baby: You are romantic, optimistic and trendy. You are outgoing and unique.

☾: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ☼: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ☼☼: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ☼☼☼: Aim high; start new projects. ☼☼☼☼: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

8 3 6 2 1

5 1 7 3

9

6 4 8

7 3 4

7 8 9

2 7 5 6

1 7 3 9 2

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

6 9 5 1 2 3 8 7 4

8 1 2 5 4 7 3 9 6

4 3 7 8 6 9 2 1 5

7 4 9 6 8 2 5 3 1

2 5 8 3 7 1 6 4 9

3 6 1 4 9 5 7 8 2

9 2 6 7 3 4 1 5 8

5 8 3 9 1 6 4 2 7

1 7 4 2 5 8 9 6 3

Difficulty: ★★★ 3-29
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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

WHOLE MILK Solution: 8 letters

M O I S T N E I D E R G N I C

D A E R B O N E E F F O C S H

V M E A L L I N A V T E R W E

E I K C T A O R G R C K E E E

T E S O D C M O A R D I P E S

A K M O S E N C E E M T E ① E

L A O K U G Z A R B I C H R ② A

O C I G P M I R I C H O ③ G

C I T E N U N E R W S E V O T

O N H S D E A K A U A N A R N

H A I D G K W O C S E F L M E

C G E O F R E S H I U T F U C

T R M A C A R O N I H R S L R

O O S E H C E L S E R T E A E

H T L A E H G U O D O N U T P

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Bake, Bone, Bread, Breakfast, Cake, Carton, Cheese, Coffee, Cookies, Cow, Crepe, Donut, Dough, Egg, Farm, Fat, Flavor, Formula, Fresh, Health, Homogenized, Hot Chocolate, Ice Cream, Ingredient, Kitchen, Macaroni, Meal, Measure, Moist, Organic, Pasteurized, Percentage, Rich, Scone, Smoothie, Soup, Sweet, Thick, Tres Leches, Udder, Vanilla, Waffle
Yesterday's Answer: Refreshed
The NEW Volume 70 can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6480.

STUMPED?

For answers to today's crossword, call 1-900-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

Luka Doncic powers Mavericks to 127-104 win over Pacers



INDIANAPOLIS (AP)—Luka Doncic finished with 25 points, seven rebounds and six assists just hours after his most recent technical foul and one-game suspension were rescinded Monday by the NBA and led the Dallas Mavericks past the Indiana Pacers 127-104.

The Mavericks snapped a four-game losing streak and remained in contention in the race for one of the final two play-in spots in the Western Conference. Kyrie Irving added 16 points and six assists for Dallas.

Indiana was led by Benedict Mathurin, who scored 22 points, and Andrew Nembhard, who had 17 points, five rebounds and five assists on a night the Pacers were missing three starters and a key backup. The Pacers have lost three straight and six of eight as they move closer to locking up a lottery pick.

Doncic had picked up his 16th technical that was rescinded on Sunday in the team's second loss to Charlotte. The technical came with 7:51 remaining in the third quarter of a 110-104 loss when Doncic argued a no-call after missing a shot on a drive to the basket. Crew chief Kevin Scott said in a pool report after the game that Doncic used "a profanity directed at the officials in protest to a no-call that was correctly judged in post-game video review."

TIMBERWOLVES 119, KINGS 115

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)—Jaden McDaniels scored 20 points and Minnesota spoiled Sacramento's bid to clinch a playoff berth



Dallas Mavericks guard Luka Doncic balances the basketball on his head after a foul was called on Dallas during the second half of an NBA basketball game against the Charlotte Hornets in Charlotte, N.C., Sunday, March 26, 2023.

for the first time since 2006, the longest playoff drought in NBA history.

The Timberwolves won their fourth straight and completed a sweep of a back-to-back set at Golden State and Sacramento to tie the Warriors for sixth place in the Western Conference playoff race.

Naz Reid scored 18 points, Anthony Edwards had 17 and Rudy Gobert had 16 points and 16 rebounds in the win.

De'Aaron Fox scored 29 points and Domantas Sabonis added 24 points and 10 rebounds for Sacramento, which shot 5 of 26 from 3-point distance.

The Kings will look to clinch a playoff berth when they travel to Portland for two games, starting Wednesday.

CLIPPERS 124, BULLS 112

LOS ANGELES (AP)—

Nicolas Batum got all of his season-high 24 points on eight 3-pointers, and Eric Gordon added 22 points as Los Angeles beat Chicago.

Kawhi Leonard scored 22 points as the Clippers rebounded from an embarrassing loss to New Orleans with 20 3-pointers in an impressive outside shooting display led by Batum.

Russell Westbrook had 12 points, 10 assists and five rebounds as Los Angeles (40-36) kept hold of fifth place in the Western Conference standings and moved a half-game behind fourth-place Phoenix.

Zach LaVine scored 23 points and Nikola Vucevic had 20 points and eight rebounds for the Bulls, who followed up their impressive win over the Lakers on Sunday with a dud.

NUGGETS 116, 76ERS 111

DENVER (AP)—Nikola

Jokic recorded his 29th triple double of the season and Denver beat short-handed Philadelphia in a game Joel Embiid sat out with a sore right calf.

That scuttled the highly anticipated showdown between MVP front-runners that many felt could have decided whether Embiid, the runner-up the last two years, denied Jokic a third consecutive award. With Embiid in the locker room, Jokic scored 25 points, pulled down 17 rebounds and dished out 12 assists.

Tyrese Maxey scored 23 of his 29 points in the first half as the Sixers dropped their third straight.

PELICANS 124, TRAIL BLAZERS 90

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP)—Brandon Ingram scored 29 points and New Orleans routed short-handed Portland.

CJ McCollum, who played

nine seasons with the Blazers before he was traded to the Pelicans last season, added 17 points. Jonas Valanciunas finished with 10 points and 21 rebounds, and New Orleans led by as many as 36.

Keon Johnson had 20 points off the bench for the Blazers, who have lost nine of 10 and will, in all likelihood, miss the playoffs for the second straight season — although they have not been mathematically eliminated. Most of their regular starters were out with injuries, including top scorer Damian Lillard (right calf), Jerami Grant (bruised left quad), Jusuf Nurkic (right knee) and Anfernee Simons (right foot).

SUNS 117, JAZZ 103

SALT LAKE CITY (AP)—Devin Booker scored 24 points and Phoenix reserves sparked the decisive run in a win over Utah.

Deandre Ayton had 14 points after missing four games with a bruised hip. But a trio off the bench was pivotal for Phoenix: Terrence Ross had 13 points, Cameron Payne added 12 and Bismack Biyombo scored 11.

The Suns (40-35) had lost four in a row on the road. But with this victory they sit more securely in the fourth spot in the Western Conference playoff race — which would give them home-court advantage in the first round.

Lauri Markkanen scored 25 points for Utah, but shot 6 for 22. Walker Kessler had 18 points and eight rebounds for the Jazz (35-40), who have lost four straight. Kessler also matched a career high with seven blocks.

KNICKS 137, ROCKETS 115

NEW YORK (AP)—Immanuel Quickley scored a career-high 40 points and Julius Randle had 26 as New York snapped a three-game losing streak with a win over Houston.

RJ Barrett added 19 points, Obi Toppin had 15 and Quinten Grimes scored 14 for the Knicks.

Quickley connected on 14 of 18 shots from the field and added nine assists. He started in place of Jalen Brunson, who missed his second straight game with a bruised right hand.

Kevin Porter Jr. led the Rockets with 26 points. Jalen Green had 19 and Kenyon Martin Jr. added 18 as Houston dropped its sixth straight game.

BUCKS 126, PISTONS 117

DETROIT (AP)—Khris Middleton scored 34 points against the team that drafted him and Milwaukee beat Detroit without Giannis Antetokounmpo.

Milwaukee improved to an NBA-best 54-21 despite the absences of Antetokounmpo (knee) and Jae Crowder (calf). Goran Dragic made his Bucks debut after signing with the team on March 4, but didn't score in nine minutes.

Brook Lopez had 24 points and 14 rebounds, Bobby Portis added 21 points and 14 rebounds, and Jevon Carter scored 22.

The Pistons got 32 points, eight rebounds and eight assists from Jaden Ivey, but lost their sixth straight game and 17th of 18. They are 1-13 against Central Division opponents.

CLEVELAND (AP)—Five years felt like 50.

When the Cleveland Cavaliers beat Houston 108-91 on Sunday night to clinch their first playoff spot since 2018, it ended a modest postseason drought for a franchise and its fans, who had grown spoiled by winning and challenging for NBA championships.

Blame LeBron James for that.

The superstar led Cleveland to four straight Finals, delivering the city its first pro sports title since 1964 in 2016. But since James left as a free agent five years ago — for the second time — his immense shadow had engulfed, if not overwhelmed, the Cavs.

They finally emerged from it. After just missing the playoffs a year ago, the Cavs reached one of their goals and have a few others on their to-do list.

"They're not satisfied with

Cavs complete long climb back to NBA playoffs without

just this," said coach J.B. Bickerstaff, who has been instrumental in the team's post-LeBron rebuild. "We ain't done yet."

Currently just two games behind Philadelphia for the No. 3 seed in the Eastern Conference, Cleveland is healthy, playing its best ball in weeks and peaking as the regular season eases into its final days.

Taking advantage of a soft section in their schedule, the Cavs, who were knocked out in the play-in tournament a year ago, have won 9 of 11 and are on track for their first 50-win season without James on the roster since 1992-93.

The road back to relevance wasn't smooth.

James' departure in the summer of 2018 was followed by several notable failures, including coach Tyronn Lue's firing six games into the 2019

season and the flawed decision to hire former Michigan coach John Beilein, who only made it to the All-Star break in 2020.

There were a pair of 19-win seasons, excursions into the NBA lottery, major injuries, team in-fighting, roster teardowns and general malfunction.

"The first year I got traded here, it was rough," recalled center Jarrett Allen, whose arrival from Brooklyn as part of the three-team James Harden trade in 2021 accelerated the turnaround. "While it was still fun, a lot of things weren't going our way at the time. Not playing for anything at the end of the year, looking forward to the summer, I think we all went through that."

"The next year, we lost in the play-in game and now we're finally here. It was a journey."

Along the way, Koby Altman, the team's president of basketball operations, has made astute moves to restructure a roster left in virtual ruin following James' departure. The Cavs now have one of the league's strongest and most promising young cores.

Altman jump started the process in 2019 by first drafting Darius Garland, who has blossomed into an elite guard at age 23. Isaac Okoro came a year later and is the team's best on-ball defender.

Forward Evan Mobley came aboard last year, and the 21-year-old not only pairs with Allen to give Cleveland a formidable frontline — it leads the league in defensive rating — but his growth on offense makes the Cavs tough to guard.

Nothing, though, has changed them more than Donovan Mitchell.

When Altman swooped in and landed Mitchell, who was thought to be headed to the New York Knicks, in a blockbuster trade with Utah in September, Cleveland sent a clear message that it's home remodeling was finished.

One of the game's most prolific scorers, Mitchell has blended in seamlessly, almost effortlessly. Not only has the supremely confident 26-year-old raised the Cavs' win total, but the team's expectations and outlook are soaring at levels not seen since James was wearing Cleveland's wine and gold colors.

Following Sunday's win, Mitchell reminded his teammates there was more to do.

"We have a bigger goal at stake. Not just making the playoffs, not just winning a first round, second round, third round," he said. "Mak-

ing it all the way. It's going to be tough. There's going to be guys or teams that have a lot of experience and have been there, but I think we're up for that challenge."

"We have that hunger. You see it with this group and on a night-to-night basis. It's continuing to prepare and continue to play all the way until June."

After pulling away from the Rockets to wrap up their 30th win inside noisy Rocket Mortgage FieldHouse, the Cavs barely celebrated on the floor before retreating to their locker room. To them, it was just another win, routine, expected.

But it meant so much more. It was the first time Cleveland had made the playoffs without James on the roster in 25 years.

"Since 1998?" Mitchell asked incredulously while looking at the scroll on the bottom of the TV. "I had no idea."

It had only felt like forever.

MLB 2023: New rules, big money Mets, Ohtani's walk year

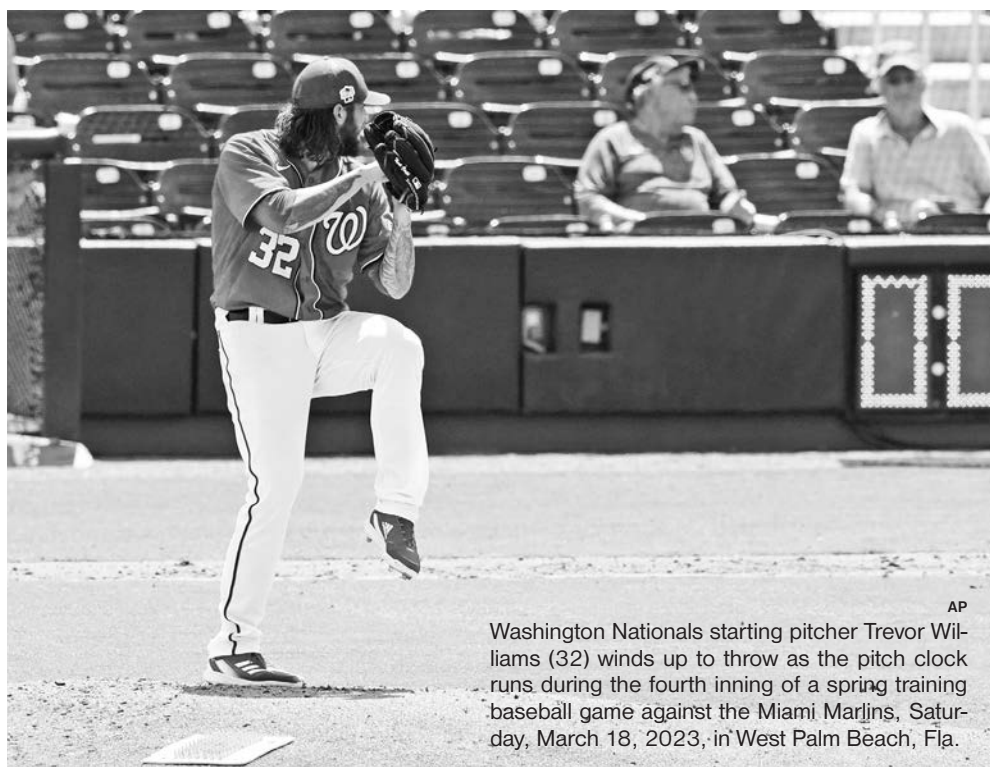
By RONALD BLUM
AP BASEBALL WRITER

Baseball has transformed in the 145 days since Dusty Baker and the Houston Astros sealed the franchise's second title in six seasons.

As New York Mets owner Steve Cohen dominated an offseason that saw billions spent, the sport braced for a new world that includes pitch clocks, bigger bases, limits on defensive shifts and pickoff throws, and an overarching attempt to reverse decades of lengthening games and the Analytics Era domination of the Three True Outcomes—strikeouts, walks and home runs.

"Late-inning relievers more than anyone will have to figure some things out and make some adjustments," Minnesota Twins manager Rocco Baldelli said. "Left-handed hitters, it's going to help them, period."

Last year's average game time was 3 hours, 4 minutes after the introduction of the PitchCom electronic device to signal pitches, down from a record 3:10 in 2021. MLB's average was 2:46 in 2005 and 2:33 in 1981. A pitch clock of 15 seconds with no runners on base and 20 seconds with runners is designed to cut game times considerably.



AP
Washington Nationals starting pitcher Trevor Williams (32) winds up to throw as the pitch clock runs during the fourth inning of a spring training baseball game against the Miami Marlins, Saturday, March 18, 2023, in West Palm Beach, Fla.

Higher pitch velocity and increased shifts led to the major league batting average dropping to .243, its lowest since 1968. The only seasons with lower averages were the record bottom of .237 in 1968 along with 1967 and the dead-ball era seasons of 1884, 1888 and 1908.

Over the objections of players, the sport's 11-man competition committee adopted a rule that two infielders are required to be on either side of second and all infielders to be within the outer boundary of the infield when the pitcher is

on the rubber. Bases were increased from 15-inch squares to 18-by-18, which shorten the distance by 4 1/2 inches and may lead to increased stolen bases.

In spring training through Sunday, games time averaged 2:35 in a drop from 3:01. Runs fell from 10.6 per game to 10.2 and batting average from .259 to .256, but batting average on balls in play rose to .325 from .314 for lefty hitters while remaining .311 for righties.

No player will be watched more closely this season than Shohei Ohtani, a two-way

megastar in the final year under contract with the Los Angeles Angels. He and three-time MVP teammate Mike Trout have played in a postseason game together. Ohtani has made it clear he wants to win. A taste of October might be needed to persuade the Japanese sensation to remain with the franchise.

Other storylines to watch include Aaron Judge's ascent to Yankee captaincy—the first since Derek Jeter—after his 62-homer season; Fernando Tatis Jr., set to return from a drug suspension on April 20,

teaming with Manny Machado to try leading the Padres to their first World Series title; and can Carlos Correa remain healthy with Minnesota after San Francisco and the Mets backed out of deals with the All-Star shortstop?

Five areas to focus on as the 2023 season starts Thursday:

LEFT-HANDED HITTERS

Batting average for left-handed hitters was .236 last year, down from .254 in 2016, when lefties were one point below the big league average.

An early focus will be on which left-handed hitters benefit most from the new shift restrictions. Among those who could be helped are Corey Seager, Kyle Schwarber, Anthony Rizzo, Cody Bellinger, Rowdy Tellez and Yordan Álvarez.

Teams still are allowed to position outfielders as they wish, so some managers may experiment with moving the left fielder into short right with certain lefties at the plate.

BASEBALL 'BILLIONS'

Cohen inspired the character of Bobby Axelrod, who returns to Showtime's "Billions" in Season 7. Season 3 of the Mets under Cohen should be as interesting as the television drama.

New York raised its payroll to a projected \$370 million

and is set to shatter the record, set by the 2015 Los Angeles Dodgers at \$291 million, while also paying a luxury tax on track to be \$116 million. The Mets added Justin Verlander, José Quintana, Kodai Senga, David Robertson and Omar Narváez while losing Jacob deGrom to Texas and re-signing Edwin Díaz, Brandon Nimmo, Jeff McNeil and Adam Ottavino to big deals. Díaz already is out for the season following a knee injury during the World Baseball Classic.

"\$300 million, which is still a lot of money, didn't get us like it used to," Cohen said.

OLD FACES IN NEW PLACES

Verlander left the champion Astros for the Mets after winning his third Cy Young Award.

Others on new teams include deGrom (Texas), Trea Turner (Phillies), Xander Bogaerts (Padres), Carlos Rodón (Yankees), Dansby Swanson (Cubs) and Willson Contreras (St. Louis).

"The goal is to make 30-plus starts and I truly believe that I will be able to do that," said deGrom, limited by injuries to 26 starts during the past two years.

NEW BOSSES

Bruce Bochy (Texas), Matt Quattraro (Kansas City), Pedro Grifol (Chicago White Sox) and Skip Schumaker (Miami) are the four new managers among the 30 teams, while interim tags were removed for Rob Thomson (Philadelphia), Phil Nevin (Los Angeles Angels) and John Schneider (Toronto).

"You do realize how much you miss it and how much fun so many different parts of the game bring to you," said the 67-year-old Bochy, who led the San Francisco Giants to three World Series titles and left after 2019, his 25th season as a big league manager.

HOT KIDS

Shortstop Anthony Volpe, just 21, made the Yankees' opening day roster after playing 22 games at Triple-A. He joins a rookie class that includes Arizona outfielder Corbin Carroll, St. Louis outfielder Jordan Walker, Baltimore infielder Gunnar Henderson, White Sox outfielder Oscar Colás, Cleveland catcher Bo Naylor and Colorado infielder Ezequiel Tovar, plus a pair of Japanese imports: Boston outfielder Masataka Yoshida and the Mets' Senga.

"I don't even know what lies ahead but Thursday I just want to go out and play, and have fun," Volpe said.

Dan Snyder's future a hot topic at NFL owners meetings



PHOENIX (AP)—Dan Snyder's future in the NFL as owner of the Washington Commanders remains in standby mode while his peers gathered at a posh resort for the league's annual meetings and waited for news on the potential sale of the team.

A discussion on Snyder isn't on the formal agenda this week, three people familiar with those details told The Associated Press on Monday. Still, Snyder was a hot topic of conversation despite his absence and even while quarterback Lamar Jackson's trade request dominated headlines.

"I think he's put the team up for sale. I believe that something is close to happening," New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft said. "I don't know that for sure. We'll wait and see what happens."

Canadian billionaire Steve Apostolopoulos recently joined groups led by Josh Harris and Tilman Fertitta to bid on purchasing the Commanders. Once Snyder accepts an offer, he must submit the bidder's name to the NFL for approval. That hasn't happened

yet, a person told the AP.

Last fall, with multiple investigations ongoing into the team's workplace culture, finances and Snyder himself, he and wife Tanya hired a firm to "consider possible transactions." Tanya continues to represent the team at league events.

Indianapolis Colts owner Jim Irsay has said there's "merit to remove" Snyder as owner of the Commanders. That would take an unprecedented vote of 24 of the other 31 team owners to happen.

Snyder and his attorneys have demanded that NFL owners and the league indemnify him against future legal liability and costs if he sells the team, a person told the AP.

Two owners said they were angered by Snyder's demand for indemnification but told the AP that they want to let the sale process play out before taking any action.

Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones said Snyder's situation has changed their relationship.

"I think that it's a little more formal, but I think it's that way because of the various issues that are involved here," Jones said. "It's not 'love-dovey,'

but it's not really strained in any way."

Snyder and the team are still under investigation by former U.S. Attorney Mary Jo White, who was retained by the league to look into various aspects of the organization stemming from a congressional review into workplace misconduct that also included a referral to the Federal Trade Commission for potential business improprieties.

A spokesperson declined to comment when asked if Snyder had refused to speak with White, saying it's a confidential matter between the club and the league.

Snyder is facing other civil suits and investigations.

The Attorney General for the District of Columbia filed two suits in civil court against the Commanders late last year: one for a scheme to cheat fans out of ticket money and another naming Snyder, Commissioner Roger Goodell and the league, saying they colluded to deceive fans about an investigation

into the team's workplace culture that ended with a \$10 million fine and no written report. The Commanders settled with the state of

Maryland, agreeing to return security deposits to former season ticket holders and pay a \$250,000 penalty.

An investigation by the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Reform, launched in October 2021 and including testimony from Snyder, Goodell and many others, said the team fostered a toxic workplace culture.

Other news out of Monday's meetings included:

LIFE-SAVING COALITION

The NFL has launched The Smart Heart Sports Coalition, a collaboration among various organizations advocating to adopt evidence-based policies that will prevent fatal outcomes from sudden cardiac arrest among high school students.

"The NFL has a history of stepping up on challenging issues," league executive Anna Isaacson said. "Damar Hamlin's life was saved. We want to save more lives."

The coalition includes the NFL, NBA, MLB, MLS, NHL, NCAA, the American Heart Association, American Red Cross, Korey Stringer Institute, National Athletic

Trainers' Association and Damar Hamlin's Chasing M's Foundation.

League executive Jeff Miller said it's critical for schools to have policies in place to deliver CPR effectively and have immediate access to AEDs.

"If a school has an emergency-action plan in place, if they have somebody trained in CPR and they have access to an AED, a lot of the most tragic situations which unfortunately happen may be prevented."

FUTURE HOSTS

League executive Peter O'Reilly said a vote on host cities for the Super Bowl in 2026 and the NFL draft in 2025 won't take place this week. O'Reilly said it's likely to be on the agenda for the May meetings.

Las Vegas hosts the Super Bowl next year and New Orleans will host the following one. Kansas City hosts the NFL draft next month and Detroit will host next year.

PRO BOWL GAMES

O'Reilly said the reimagined Pro Bowl with a week of activities and competition capped by flag football is here to stay. He said 100% of players surveyed favor the new format

Sufa, Man Amigos wallop foes in BASA



LEIGH GASES
Man Amigos' Mark Toves winds up for a swing in this file photo of their game in the 2023 Budweiser Belau Amateur Softball Association League at the Dan-Dan Softball Field.

By **LEIGH GASES**
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Sufa and Man Amigos walloped their foes in the men's division of the 2023 Budweiser Belau Amateur Softball Association League last Sunday at the DanDan Softball Field.

Sufa had a 20-7 win over Asahi, while the Man Amigos bested Momma Charo, 14-3.

In a run-ruled mercy game, Sufa was a force to be reckoned with right from the jump, with a home run by Paul Salalila. The rest of the lineup followed the leader with a triple by Audie Maratita. Four more runs came in for a 6-0 game.

Asahi replied with just two runs as Sufa's pitcher Mario Aguon kept his pitches steady. Then Asahi's Dominic Hideo

regained his composure and got out of the second inning without further damage, but Sufa got a piece of him for a three-run third inning.

However, Asahi could only get five more runs in the next three innings in contrast to Sufa's 11, and the game ended early when the home team couldn't produce anymore.



In the Man Amigos game, Momma Charo was out of their depth as the

latter went for three run-less innings even with Momma Charo's Ilo Chico solo home run at the top of the first inning.

Only Jayboy Tilipao and Bernard Kileleman were able to score two runs in the last inning as the rest of the lineup struggled to hit quality shots.

Meanwhile, Man Amigos were on a roll with Joey Dela

Cruz slamming two consecutive home runs for six RBIs. Bill Camacho had a home run himself and by the end of the last inning, eight runs were made and the game ended early as Momma Charo had no more runs in them.

Hagu La'mun 22, Tutturamz 4

It was a lopsided win as Tutturamz were overpowered in the first three innings.

Hagu La'muns' bats came ablaze in the third inning with back-to-back home runs by Kel Kapileo, which is now his second, and Joe Celis, following a home run by Glen Camacho in the first.

Tutturamz's defenses crumbled as multiple errors allowed Hagu La'mun to reach base—eventually filling up the scoreboard. By the end of the third, 18 runs had been

coming games.”

In other results in the men's open division, Guam's Ezekiel Cabaccang was the lone lifter in the 61-kg weight class for the gold with a 90-kg snatch, 110-kg clean & jerk, and 200-kg overall weight lifted.

In the 73-kg weight class, Guam's Viranousith Khamvongsa was the lone competitor with a total weight lifted of 142 kg. His best snatch was 66 kg and his best clean & jerk was 76 kg.

For CNMI weightlifters, the Marianas Cup serves as a qualifier for a spot on the CNMI National Weightlifting Team for the upcoming Micronesian and Pacific Games.

Results of the other men's weight classes, the women's division, and the youth/junior divisions will be posted in the next issues of *Saipan Tribune*.

get hyped up.”

Despite not feeling 100%, Limes still managed to break his personal best on the snatch by 1 kg and increase his competition total by 6 kg.

“It was fun competing at home with my family there watching me. The overall vibe in the warm up room was amazing too. It felt like just another heavy training day for us. We stayed focused but we still had fun,” he said.

As for the postponement of the Micronesian Games, he said he had a feeling it would be pushed back, but “I'm not too worried about that. At least now I can just focus on training for the Pacific Games.”

With training, he said it's “about to get a lot harder from now on. I know I'm gonna have to push myself even more if I wanna do well in these up-

son had the most markers with 8 each.

The rest of the Lancherus are Darion Adelbai, Chase Agulto, Petuel Albert, David Apatang, Gregorio Rodriguez, Santiago Seman, Jacob Santos, Mark Sasaki, Jake Faisao, Aiken Norita, Payton Pangelinan, Jeremyah Kisa, and Jevaughn Villagomez.

In other results, Francisco M. Sablan Middle School lost to Saipan International by 1 point, 24-25; DanDan Middle School overpowered Mount Carmel School, 31-16;

and Agape Christian School almost silenced Hopwood Middle School, 33-11.

SCS 30 – Ye 29, Sablan 1.

TMS 16 – Cruz 11, Tudela 3, Yokota 2.

Scoring by halves: 16-6; 30-16.

COVMS 24 – Nekaifes and Wilson 8, Seman 4, Agulto and Adelbai 2.

GCA 16 – Tatiano 14, Takahashi 2.

Scoring by halves: 9-8; 24-16.

scored for Hagu La'mun while only three had been scored by Tutturamz.

It was a losing effort as the game ended early on account of Tutturamz inability to catch up on a wide lead.

Tokahao 19, Aimeliik 1 Time 6

Tokahao showed Aimeliik no mercy, putting 13 runs by the third inning.

Cricket noises were heard over Aimeliik's offense and

couldn't nip the ball until the fourth inning when a grand slam by Taylor Germance brought in four runs. Only two more runs were scored by Aimeliik for the rest of the game.

As for Tokahao, a home run was made by Clint Quitugua and had four RBIs in the game, while Marco Peter and Larry Deleon Guerrero had three.

HANMI Charity Golf tourney to benefit MTEC, 500 Sails



The Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands has designated Marianas Tourism Education Council and 500 Sails as the primary beneficiaries of the 21st Annual HANMI Charity Classic Golf Tournament on July 15, 2023, at Lao Lao Bay Golf & Resort west course.

MTEC is a non-profit organization committed to educating the Marianas community, especially school children, about the Marianas tourism industry.

“On behalf of the MTEC board of directors, we are pleased to partner with the Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands' upcoming golf tournament,” said MTEC acting chair Vicky Benavente. “These are challenging times for the CNMI's tourism industry, but we're certain that everyone can contribute in one way or another to help us through these difficult situations.”

500 Sails is a non-profit organization dedicated to restoring the maritime traditions of the Mariana Islands.

“500 Sails is thrilled to be

selected as one of the beneficiaries of the 21st Annual HANMI Charity Classic Golf Tournament,” said 500 Sails managing director Kuen-Hee Han. “As 500 Sails works to revive, promote, and preserve the maritime cultural traditions of the Mariana Islands through

community engagement in canoe culture and activities, we look toward our partners in HANMI to be our anchors in welcoming our guests. We are honored to be chosen and look forward to forging a stronger relationship with HANMI in the days ahead.”

The tournament will be open to the first 144 paid registrants. Registration forms will be available next month at LaoLao Bay Golf & Resort for payment.

“The Marianas Tourism Education Council and 500 Sails are two important partners of the tourism industry that we are pleased to support with our tournament this year,” said HANMI chair Ivan Quichocho. “MTEC plays an active role in engaging young people at the schools with the

message that, ‘Tourism is Everybody's Business.’ And 500 Sails plays an important and growing role in providing the authentic cultural experiences that today's visitor is expecting when they travel. We salute their work.”

The tournament's popular blackjack double Peoria format will return. The early bird tournament fee is \$150 and includes optional play this year, as well as a green fee and the awards luncheon. The fee increases to \$170 after the early bird deadline on Friday, July 2, at 5pm. Option play will include accurate drive (hole No. 9) and four chances for nearest to the pin (holes Nos. 3, 7, 13, and 17). Showtime is 6am and the tournament will start at 7am.

Sponsor packages include Hole-in-One, Presidential Suite, Deluxe, Superior, VIP and In-kind, providing various levels of complimentary player slots, and publicity and marketing. To sponsor the tournament or for more information, contact Tournament chair Juko Ishikawa at worldresort@pticom.com. (PR)

LIMES

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with an overall weight lifted of 220 kg, a 100-kg snatch, and a 120-kg clean & jerk.

Joseph Pangelinan was second to Apelo with an 83-kg snatch, 102-kg clean & jerk, and 185-kg total weight lifted.

San Nicolas was the lone entry in the 102-kg weight class and lifted 110 kg in snatch, 150 kg in the clean & jerk, with an overall weight lifted of 260 kg.

For 29-year-old Limes, he said “The competition was great despite not feeling 100% ready. I had been so busy with work that I had to miss some training days. But being in that warm up room with the rest of the athletes changed my whole mood and helped me

GUARDIANS

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half as they led only by 1 point at the end of the first, 9-8.

The Eagles' Maximus Taitano was a force on the court and made all their points except for two which was made by Minako Takahashi. However, the Lancherus moved the ball around smoothly and made easy shots to pull ahead towards the end of the game.

The Lancherus' Zayden Nekaifes and Liam Wil-

friends, the food, sports, hangouts, and me serving as announcer in basketball leagues... of course I also miss the beauty and the simple life of the islands,” he said.

Before shifting to badminton a few years ago where he played with his beloved wife and coining “Musika” during his stint as basketball announcer, Alvarez was a feared big man on the hard court.

Among the teams he played for was Kentucky Fried Chicken where he suited up with the likes of Bruce Berline, Tony Raho, Andy Nepatial, Roger Valencia, and the late Warren Villegas.

He was also in the lineup of Bud Ice in the Centennial Basketball League, Aquarius Hotel in the inter-hotel league, and POWER in the UFO league. Among his teammates in those squads were Boy Garcia, June Alipio, Boyet, Suing, Jeff Garcia, Rene Pe, Ed Pal-

ma, Bogs Dayrit, and the late Pasky Peleno.

The lone championship he won on Saipan was when he was with Team Pepsi in the Shirley's Coffee Shop league where he joined forces with the likes of Jojo Garon and Kiko Sarmiento.

His message to all basketball fans on Saipan is “keep on ballin' and enjoy the game and thank you to everyone who supported me!”

Alvarez, made special mention of his adopted family on the island, among them the families of Jojo and Merlie Savellano, Boyong Dela Rosa, Lito and Malou Mendoza, Ding Ordones, Shirley Kim, Anette Ta, Roger and Celia Vales, Ellie Betchay Garcia, Billy and Loida, Kuya Boy and Violy Ching, his DLX and Eagles family, Blu Haus family, DFS airport staff, badminton family, and “all my local friends...I miss and love you all,” he said.

GEN.

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movie, or going to the mall,” he said in Filipino.

Alvarez admitted he imbibed alcohol with friends almost daily when he was still on Saipan, but that's no longer the case with his new life on Oregon with his busy schedule.

“Probably when I finally have a group of friends then I'll go back to drinking, but only occasionally now because everyone is busy with work and everyone I know lives far away,” said Alvarez, who bears a resemblance to Philippine Sen. Ronald “Bato” dela Rosa.

A good consequence of his busy schedule and new no-alcohol lifestyle is he now weighs 30 lbs lighter.

Asked what he misses most about Saipan, which was home for 31 years, Alvarez said it's the whole package.

“I miss everything... my



Luka Dončić powers
Mavericks to 127-
104 win over Pacers

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Sufa, Man Amigos
wallop foes
in BASA

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SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Limes, San Nicolas, Apelo top Marianas Cup



Apelo



Limes



San Nicolas

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Weights were flying as 32 lifters from CNMI and Guam took to the podium for the Marianas Cup 2023 weightlifting competition on a busy Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

CNMI's heavy lifters Jason Limes (+109 kg), Angel San Nicolas (102 kg), and Leonardo Apelo Jr. (89 kg) bested the competition in their respective weight classes.

Limes had a best lift in the snatch with 122 kg, a 150-kg clean & jerk, and a total weight lifted of 272 kg. Apelo

had a 120-kg snatch, a 160-kg clean & jerk, and an overall 280-kg weight lifted.

Second to Limes is Guam's Peter San Nicolas with a 110-kg snatch, 140-kg

clean & jerk, and 250-kg overall weight lifted and third is the CNMI's David Barnhouse

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Guardians, Lancherus scoop wins in MS hoops opener



LEIGH GASES

Saipan Community School's David Ye, left, attempts a layup against a Tanapag Middle School defender during the opening game of the IT&E Interscholastic Boys Middle School Basketball League 2022-2023 last Monday at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Saipan Community School Guardians and ChaCha Ocean View Middle School Lancherus debuted with wins after drubbing their foes in the season opener of the IT&E Interscholastic Boys Middle School Basketball League 2022-2023 on Monday at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

The Guardians enjoyed a lopsided win against the Tanapag Middle School Tatagas, 30-16, while the Lancherus harvested a 24-16 win over the Grace Christian Academy Eagles.

David Ye was the guardian of the ball as he almost single-handedly made all the points save for one made by Jose Sablan from a free throw.

The Tatagas could not keep

pace with Ye as he stormed the court and made easy layups and field goals without much opposition. Ye was a ball magnet and did what he did best—score. By the end of the game, the Tatagas were exhausted from trying to defend Ye and his teammates and succumbed to their first loss.

Jae Aeden Cruz sank 11 points for the Tatagas, while Jeremiah Yokota scored 2, and Anthon Tudela scored a three-pointer.

The Guardians including Ye and Sablan are Joshua Yoo, Daniel Li, David Park, Ma'ase De Oro, Tony Xiao, Soo Ho Jin, Richard Zhao, Patrick McDonald, and Elijah Pangelinan.

In the Lancherus-Eagles game, the Lancherus had to work extra hard in the second

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'Gen. Bato' Alvarez soldiers on in mainland

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Alvin "Gen. Bato" Alvarez is playing beautiful music with congregants of a caregiving facility in Oregon where he now works as an attendant.

The 56-year-old Pasay City in the Philippines native said since arriving in the U.S. mainland to join his family late last year and

finally getting a job, all that he's been doing is work.

"My life has turned around completely. It's now all work and you just use your house as a place to sleep. On your day off that's when you do your household chores like cleaning and laundry plus quality time with your family. You relax by going out to dinner with the family, watching a

See GEN. on Page 19



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Basketball announcer Alvin "Gen. Bato" Alvarez now works at a caregiving facility in Oregon.